

*The Proskynetarion from the Monastery of the Holy Cross and the Map of the Holy Land**

Pnina ARAD

The association between proskynetaria and the map of the Holy Land seems to be much more inherent than has been assumed in previous research, which refers only to similarities in composition¹. Far beyond the shape, however, the cartographical aspect appears to be essential to the representation. This paper sheds new light on the significance of the cartographical delineation to be found in proskynetaria, discussing issues of medium and image. The paper focuses on the proskynetarion from the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem (hereinafter the *proskynetarion*).

Dated to 1770 and attributed to Gregory the Protosyncellus², the abbot of the Monastery of the Holy Cross at the end of the eighteenth century, the *proskynetarion* is a wooden panel in semi-oval form, measuring 2.70 × 1.70 m (Pl. 1). In accordance with the conventional layout to be found among the eighteenth-century proskynetaria, it presents the *loca sancta* and the holy events associated with them in geographical settings³. With the east at the top, it shows the region from the Mediterranean shore in the west (lower left corner) to the mountainous desert in the east (top) and from the Galilee in the north (left) to Bethlehem in the south (right). Within the bounds of this layout the *loca sancta* and the holy events are represented, identified by inscriptions in Greek. From the bottom, reading upward, are the port of Jaffa, the Monastery of the Holy Cross (in which the *proskynetarion* is housed), Mount Zion, and Ein Karem (right corner). The central part of the representation is dedicated to Jerusalem and its environment, with the focus on the Crucifixion in the centre. To its left is the Mount of Olives with its several sites, and further, an enclosed space titled as 'the Garden', housing the Holy Sepulchre (far left). To the right of the Crucifixion are Bethany, the Monastery of Prophet Elijah⁴, and Bethlehem (far right). Several *loca sancta* from the Galilee and the Judean Desert are seen on the level beyond the Crucifixion including,

from left to right, Nazareth, Mount Tabor, the Jordan River, the Mount of Temptation, and the Monastery of St Sabas⁵.

The various sites are indicated by two modes of representations. Some are represented by a building, no matter if the entity in question is a city (as Jericho), a holy place (Rachel's Tomb), or one of the several Greek monasteries scattered over the area⁶. However, the principal sites are referred to by iconic scenes. These include the conspicuous Crucifixion on the Golgotha hill, the Anastasis next to the Holy Sepulchre, the Annunciation in Nazareth, the Nativity in Bethlehem, the Baptism in the

* I wish to thank Dr Galit Noga-Banai for her valuable remarks and Dr Vasilius Tzaferis, who generously provided me with the photograph of the proskynetarion from the Monastery of the Holy Cross.

¹ For example: Immerzeel 2005, 18; Rubin 2003; Tzaferis 1987, 29.

² A cartouche with a dedication appears in the lower right-hand corner. The legible part reads: '...of the Protosyncellus Gregory of St Maura, on the 10th of July 1770.' Gregory of St Maura was the abbot of the Monastery of the Cross at the end of the eighteenth century, and his name appears on another icon from the same date. The dedication contains also the painter's name, but unfortunately it is almost illegible, see Tzaferis 1984, 33.

³ The proskynetaria were usually painted on canvases and were sold to pilgrims as souvenirs, for further reading, see several articles in *ECA* 2. The geographical setting is more prominent in the eighteenth-century proskynetaria than in the nineteenth-century ones, in which the hagiographical themes are more dominant, see Immerzeel 2005, 23. Nevertheless, the geographical layout can also be discerned in the later ones.

⁴ The monastery is situated on the way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, commemorating the site where according to tradition Elijah rested in his flight from the vengeance of Jezebel (1 Kings 19).

⁵ The monastery is located east of Bethlehem and was founded by St Sabas himself in 439.

⁶ These include, in addition to the three aforementioned monasteries, Katamun and St Nicolas in Jerusalem, and the monasteries of St John the Baptist and of St Gerasimos beside the Jordan River.

Jordan River, the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, the Temptation of Christ in the Desert, and the Assumption of the Virgin in Gethsemane. In addition to these iconic representations there are several painted depictions, including the figures of the Prophet Elijah and of St Sabas next to their respective monasteries; two episodes from the New Testament – the Annunciation to the Shepherds and the Baptism of the Eunuch by St Philip the Evangelist on the bottom of the board; and a caravan of pilgrims on its way right to the city of Jaffa.

The layout of the *proskynetarion* brings to mind the traditional map of the Holy Land. However, beyond similarities in outline – showing the country orientated to the east, with the Mediterranean shore on the bottom, the Jordan River and the mountainous desert on the horizon, and a large and detailed depiction of Jerusalem in the centre (Pl. 2)⁷ – the likeness seems to lie in the very nature of the two representations, in their similar ways of proclaiming the holiness of the country. The *proskynetarion* offers a multilevel image that represents a combination of geography, theology, and history, referring simultaneously to past and present. The combination is achieved by blurring the distinction between contemporary occurrence and biblical tradition, between present and past – all represented by the same visual means and without differentiation. Whereas the past is illuminated and evoked by the representation of holy scenes in specific places, the present is referred to by the caravan of the pilgrims. This unique combination – of past and present, holy and profane – can also be found in the Holy Land map and is indeed one of its most fundamental

characteristics. In the Madaba Mosaic Map, for example, the holy past is evoked in numerous captions, indicating biblical events or referring to the presence and activities of saintly personages in the country⁸. The combination between present and past is attained by blurring the distinction between the sixth-century contemporaneous geographical facts and biblical tradition. Examples of this approach include the designation of the provinces of the country according to the biblical tribal territories, and the reference to biblical sites and events for which there is no evidence on the ground in conjunction with contemporary localities and occurrences. Yet, observations such as ‘where the Lord walked’ not only took viewers back in time to important events, but also emphasized the physical contact of the saintly personage with the specific site. This multilayered representation characterizes the maps of the Holy Land throughout the Middle Ages up to the Early Modern period⁹. As a medium of representation, therefore, the map of the Holy Land appears capable of conveying the particular quality of the country as a sacred space. Furthermore, it appears also as a medium capable of conveying the experience of pilgrimage itself – walking between earthly geography and sacred geography, between mundane present and exalted past¹⁰.

Derived from the cartographical medium in a sense, the *proskynetarion* is, however, an icon in the literal sense of the word. The iconic implication is transmitted not only by the iconic depictions throughout the representation, but also by the particular assemblage of the very scenes. Grouping together scenes such as the Annunciation, Nativity, Baptism, Transfiguration, Crucifixion, Anastasis, and the Assumption of the Virgin is often thought to be associated with the Twelve Great Feasts of the Greek Orthodox liturgical year¹¹. Portraying the main events from the lives of Christ and the Virgin, the Festival icons assume particular significance in Orthodox thought and ritual, and are part of the general message of the iconostasis, referring to the salvation of mankind through the incarnation of Christ. Whereas traditionally they were presented side by side, isolated by frames, these icons were integrated on the *proskynetarion* into one unified multi-episodic narrative, occurring in the space of the Holy Land. Presenting the figures of the Prophet Elijah and St Sabas seems to be another application of the Byzantine iconostasis, on which the local saints are represented side by side with the

⁷ This layout was formulated already during the Late Antique period, appearing in the earliest surviving map of the Holy Land, the well-known Madaba Mosaic Map in the Church of St George in Madaba (Jordan), made in the second half of the sixth century.

⁸ For the captions in Madaba map, see Avi-Yonah 1954; Piccirillo 1999, 81-95, with further bibliography.

⁹ See, for example, the printed map from 1486 in Bernard von Breydenbach's book, Davies 1968, Pls 25-29.

¹⁰ For the concept of geography in pilgrimage, see Limor 2006; for the correlation between the map of the Holy Land and the experience of pilgrimage, see Arad 2009.

¹¹ The festival icons, known as the Byzantine *Dodekaorton*, usually were aligned in a row on the iconostasis, consisting of: the Annunciation, Nativity, Presentation of Christ in the Temple, Baptism, Transfiguration, Raising of Lazarus, Entry into Jerusalem, Crucifixion, Anastasis, Ascension, Pentecost, and the Dormition of the Virgin.

principal figures of faith. Thus, on the one hand the *proskynetarion* is an iconic representation that follows the Orthodox tradition in order to transmit a message of salvation; on the other, it enhances this message by emphasizing the quality of the Holy Land as a holy space – as the stage on which the sublime events were once enacted. As mentioned, this aspect was traditionally expressed by the Holy Land maps. It becomes clear, that the proskynetaria's craftsmen borrowed the map's composition because of its ability to express this elaborated message. However, they took one step forward while making a picture that belongs to the realm of Greek Orthodox imagery.

In comparison to other eighteenth-century proskynetaria, the *proskynetarion* from the Monastery of the Holy Cross appears exceptional.¹² Several elements are usually depicted, including the representation of Jerusalem in the centre with an emphasis on the building of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre¹³, and the illustration of the story of the Holy Wood at the bottom of the picture (Pl. 3). However, in the *proskynetarion* from the Monastery of the Holy Cross these two elements are missing, undoubtedly with deliberate purpose. This must be significant especially in light of the fact that the Monastery of the Holy Cross commemorates the particular tradition of the Holy Wood, all the more so as the city of Jerusalem is among the things omitted. It seems this was done in order to emphasize neither the city nor the specific tradition but, instead, the Monastery of the Holy Cross itself within the Christian narrative. Depicted according to its appearance *in situ*, the compound of the monastery is located in front of the Golgotha hill in such a way that the monastery itself becomes an integral part of the Crucifixion scene. Utilizing the fundamental association between the Holy Wood and the Holy Cross, this composition was seemingly designed to glorify the monastery as the place of origin of the Cross; the message, however, seems to be more elaborate than this. Actually the monastery is seen at the bottom of an implicit central vertical axis, created by the movement of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove that is descending from Heaven toward the

monastery through Baptism and Crucifixion. This particular *proskynetarion* accentuates the centrality of the monastery rather than of the city or the tradition of the Holy Wood, apparently in order to integrate the monastery itself into the principal narrative of faith.

To sum up, the *proskynetarion* from the Monastery of the Holy Cross appears to be an integration between two representative traditions: the Greek Orthodox iconostasis and the map of the Holy Land. By using the cartographical composition, and by blending into it the familiar Byzantine imagery, the craftsman of this *proskynetarion* formed a new variant of representation, expressing a multilayered idea of sacredness.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

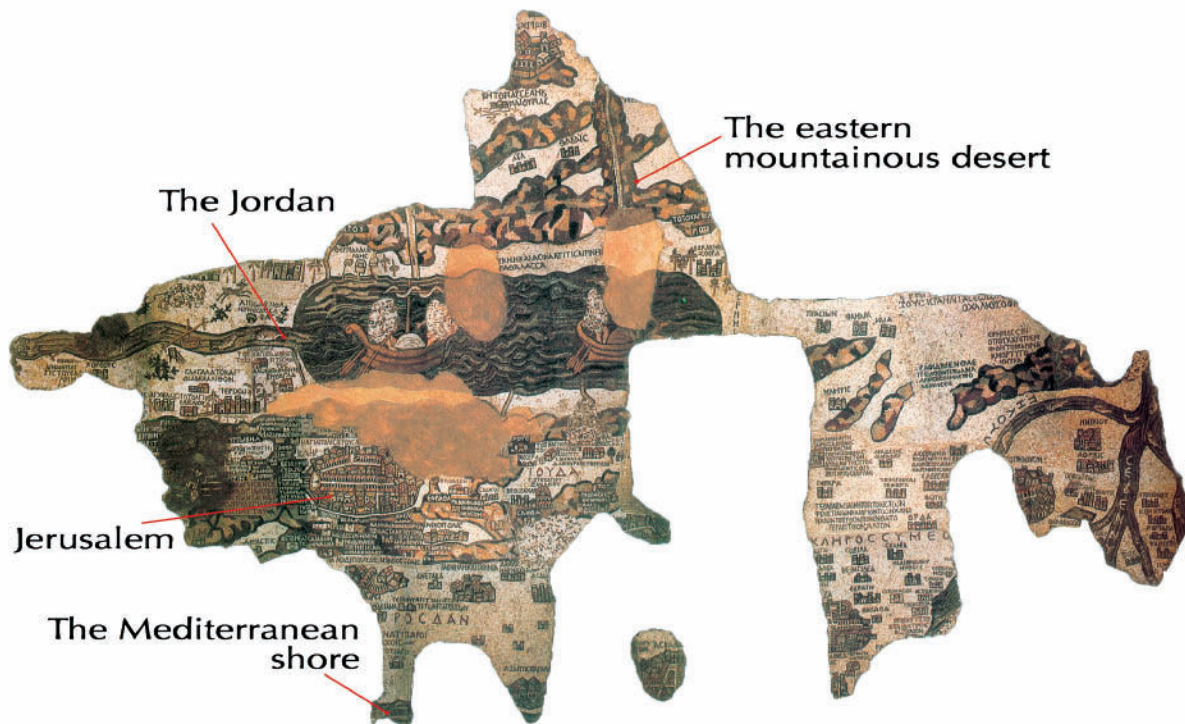
- Arad, P. 2009, 'Mapping Divinity', in: A. Hoffmann, G. Wolf (eds), *Jerusalem as Narrative Space*, Florence, forthcoming.
- Avi-Yonah, M. 1954, *The Madaba Mosaic Map*, with Introduction and Commentary, Jerusalem.
- Davies, H. 1968, *Bernhard Von Breydenbach and His Journey to the Holy Land 1483-84*, Utrecht.
- Immerzeel, M. 2005, 'Proskynetaria from Jerusalem. Souvenirs of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land', *Series Byzantina* III, 9-24.
- Limor, O. 2006, 'Holy Journey': Pilgrimage and Christian Sacred Landscape', in: O. Limor, G. Stroumsa (eds), *Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land: From the Origins to the Latin Kingdom*, Turnhout, 321-353.
- Piccirillo, M. 1999, *The Madaba Map Centenary 1987-1997*, Jerusalem.
- Rubin, R. 2003, 'Two Cartographical Icons of the Holy City and its Environs', in: Y. Ben-Arieh, E. Reiner (eds), *Studies in the History of Eretz Israel, Presented to Yehuda ben Porat*, Jerusalem, 429-448 (in Hebrew).
- Tzaferis, V. 1987, *The Monastery of the Cross in Jerusalem*, Jerusalem.

¹² The painting on wood instead of canvas is also one of the *proskynetarion*'s exceptionalities. It suggests that it was not meant to be taken away by pilgrims, as was with the canvas proskynetaria. I thank Mat Immerzeel for this insight.

¹³ Sometimes only the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is represented, symbolizing the city.



Pl. 1. Proskynetarion; Monastery of the Holy Cross, Jerusalem, 1770 (photograph Vasilius Tzaferis)



Pl. 2. Map of the Holy Land, sixth century, Madaba, Church of St George (after Piccirillo 1999, folding plate between pp. 98 and 99)



Pl. 3. Proskynetarion; Monastery of St Anthony, Egypt, eighteenth century (photograph Mat Immerzeel)



Pl. 1. Church of Abunä Abrāham Däbrä Şayon: façade (rock face). The entrance to the nave is on the right, and the north-east entrance to the ambulatory is the tall opening on the extreme left. Note the imitation Axumite horizontal beams and 'monkey heads' on the lower part of the rock face (photograph Christopher Tribe, 1996)

⁸ Gerster 1970. These churches had first been brought to the attention of the scholarly community in the early 1960s by Abba Tewoldemedhin Yosef, the secretary of the Catholic Mission at Addigrat, who identified over one hundred such structures, including one in Adwa and six in the vicinity of Aksum, Təgray. See Abba Tewoldemedhin Yosef 1969. Other publications followed, including Juel-Jensen/Rowell 1975 and Plant 1985. More recent works on this subject include: Finneran 2007; Lepage/Mercier 2005; Phillipson 2009.

⁹ The chronology of the rock-hewn churches in Ethiopia remains a topic of heated debate among archaeologists, historians and art historians. David Phillipson's recent book (Phillipson 2009) provides a comprehensive analysis of and likely chronology for both built and rock-hewn churches in Eastern Təgray and Amhara, clearly identifying their links with the Aksumite building tradition. See also Finneran 2007 and Lepage/Mercier 2005.

¹⁰ This is a still poorly known period. See Sergew Hable-Selassie 1972; Taddesse Tamrat 1972; and also Derat 2003; Munro-Hay 1997.

Continuing into the Middle Ages and beyond, this same technique was used in Təgray to fashion distinct Christian spaces within the rugged topography in four main zones: Aşbi, Həwzen-Gär'alta, Sənqaṭa-Addigrat, and Tāmben⁸ (Fig. 1). In the Gär'alta area almost all the mountains contain one or more such rock-hewn churches. Some were probably carved out as early the reigns of Aksumite emperors such as Kaleb (510-558 CE)⁹. Others are likely to date from long after the Arab takeover of the Red Sea trade routes in the seventh century CE and the overthrow of the remnants of Aksumite urban culture associated with the activities of a non-Christian warrior Queen, Gudit, in the late tenth century. Christianity survived in the region, however, and in the early twelfth century Christian, Agäw-speaking kings of the Zag^we dynasty came to power¹⁰.

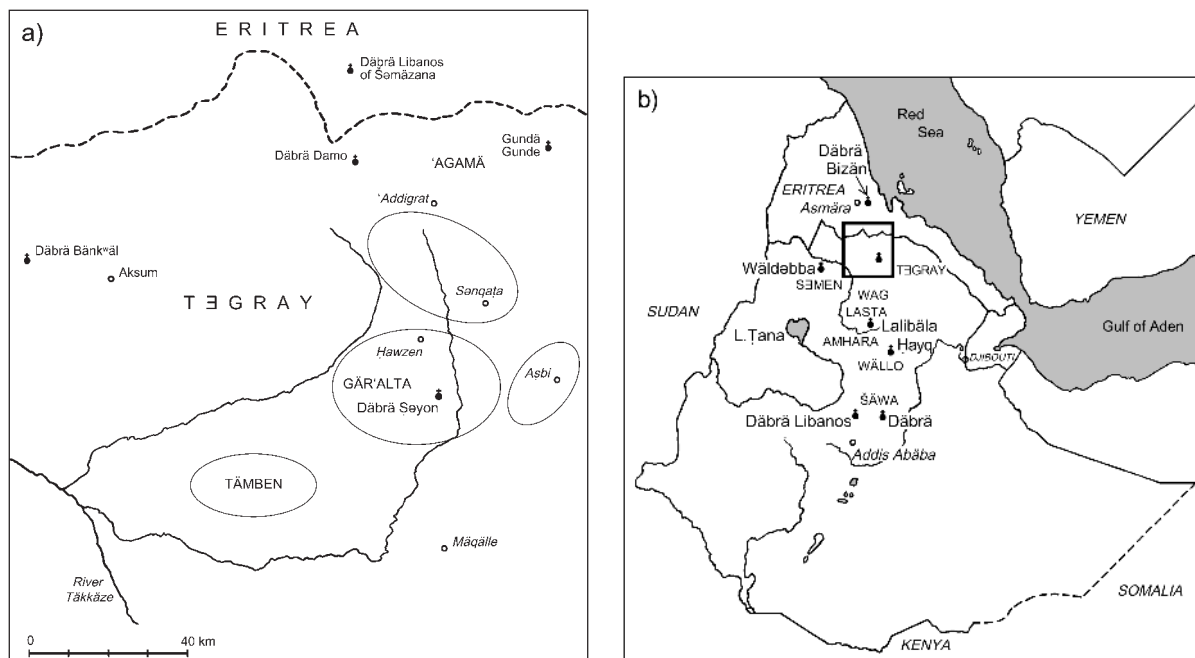


Fig. 1. Map of (a) central Təgray and (b) Ethiopia, showing the location of churches, towns and regions mentioned in the text. Former Ethiopian provinces in roman capitals; present-day cities and country names in italics. The main clusters of rock-hewn churches in Təgray are located in the areas indicated by ellipses. The rectangle in map (b) represents the area covered by map (a)

Tradition associates them with the founding of the notable built cave church of Yəmrəhannä Krəstos and the major rock-carved ceremonial centre of Lalibäla, both in Lasta¹¹. Subsequently, in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, further churches – including Abunä Abrəham Däbrä Şeyon – were founded in Təgray under the expanding influence of Amharic-speaking Solomonic kings from the more southerly highland areas of Amhara (Amara) and Šäwa¹².

Gär'alta appears to have emerged as a Christian political centre in about the sixth century, when Kaleb was in power in Aksum and the Nine Saints and *Sadqan* were embarking on their missionary activities in the region. Its importance was expressed, for instance, in churches such as the Šəllase complex at Dəgum, on the Hawzen plain, which incorporated three elite subterranean funerary structures of pre-Christian origin¹³. The persistence of such a centre into post-Aksumite times may, as some scholars suggest, have forged a local political power-base around which local cultural and religious traditions developed¹⁴. Eventually, the resulting religious culture of the Təgrayan monastic houses flourished

and affirmed its autonomy during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, often challenging the cultural and theological policies fostered by the Solomonic kings¹⁵.

The importance of this northern tradition can be seen from the fact that King Yəkunno Amlak (d. 1285), the founder of the new dynasty of Amhara rulers, appropriated the power to bestow the prestigious monastic title of *äččäge sä'at*, which designates the monk in charge of 'guarding the hours' and the 'royal lists', and determining the times for prayer. This title, originally linked to Abba Mätta', one of the missionaries recorded as active during the Aksumite period¹⁶, had always

¹¹ Buxton 1947; Finneran 2007, 225-236; Phillipson 2009. See also Balicka-Witakowska/Gervers 2001 for the Church of Yəmrəhannä Krəstos, and Gervers 2003a; *idem* 2003b for the Lalibäla churches.

¹² Derat 2003.

¹³ Phillipson 2009, 89-91.

¹⁴ Finneran 2007, 216-217; Taddesse Tamrat 1972, 81 n. 1.

¹⁵ See Kaplan 1984, 21-25; Lusini 1993.

¹⁶ See Alessandro Bausi's edited and annotated translation of the Gädlä Abba Mätta' (Libanos) (Bausi 2003).

been associated with the influential northern monastery of Däbrä Libanos in the Šəmāzana region of present-day Eritrea¹⁷. By bestowing it on abbot Iyäsus Mo'ä, the head of the southern monastery of ʾĪstifanos (Stephen), founded in about 1250 on Lake Ḥayq, in the Amḥara region of Wällo, Yəkunno Amlak symbolically reinforced and extended the importance of his own geographical and political power-base, endowing it with the prestige until then associated with the northern regions¹⁸. In a similar process, the name of the northern monastery of Däbrä Libanos was appropriated by the monastic house founded, according to tradition, by Saint Tāklä Haymanot (ca1215 – ca1313) at Däbrä 'Asbo, in the southern region of Šäwa. It forged the symbolic connotations that helped turn this southern foundation into a major centre of Amḥara dominance¹⁹. Meanwhile, the abbots in Šəmāzana continued to use their old dedication, and to maintain their role as a centre of northern resistance to Amḥara ascendancy²⁰.

Solomonic royal dominance was also achieved through the strategic concession of numerous land grants (*gult*) to monasteries in both Təgray and Amḥara. These grant lands became obligatory stops on the royal circuits and led to the creation of royal

churches and monasteries, which directly relayed the power and magnificence of the king and displayed his authority over the local spiritual domain through notable architecture, beautifully illustrated books and precious crosses. Political resistance was overcome in bloody battles waged by Kings 'Amdä Šəyon (1314-1344) and Säyfä Ar'ad (or Nəwayä Krəstos, 1344-1372), which also helped bring the northern regions under royal Amḥara control. Finally, Dawit I and his son Yəshaq (1414-1429), succeeded in establishing greater royal state dominance over the Church²¹, laying the foundations for the emergence of a common religious culture, theologically unified under King Zär'a Ya'eqob (1434-1468)²².

In contrast to the Ethiopian secular clergy and the Egyptian bishops regularly sent by the Coptic patriarchate in Alexandria to head the Ethiopian Church²³, all of whom were subordinate to Solomonic royal authority, it appears that a number of charismatic, independent-minded Ethiopian ascetics consistently defied the royal command in both Təgray and Amḥara, as indicated in numerous Ethiopic *gädlät* narrating the life and miracles of saints²⁴. The early fourteenth-century monk Bäšälotä Mika'el, abbot of Däbrä Gol in Amḥara, for instance, is said to have attacked King 'Amdä Šəyon himself for upholding non-Christian sexual customs and taking several wives and concubines, until he was simply banished by the king to Təgray²⁵.

During these decades of conflict, certain northern monastic communities expressed their political disagreement with Amḥara and Šäwa in acerbic disputes over particular theological points. Some of the most prominent were the followers of Abba Ewostatewos (ca 1273 - ca 1352), who established monastic houses in remote border areas of present-day Eritrea, where they continued to observe the biblical Sabbath as well as Sunday even after their leader had left Ethiopia in ca 1338 for Egypt, Palestine, Cyprus, and Armenia, where he died²⁶. One such house was Däbrä Bizän, founded by Abba Filäppos in Ḥamasen, on the Eritrean escarpment, in 1390; another was Gundä Gunde on the border between Təgray and Eritrea, which in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was to become the centre for the Stephanites, monastic dissidents who followed ʾĪstifanos (born ca 1394). They preached strict observance of Christian virtues, rules and principles and, as the Ewostatewans had done, questioned practices they felt did not accord with the Scriptures, including excessive adoration of the Virgin Mary²⁷.

¹⁷ Derat 2003, 94. See also Bausi 1999; Conti Rossini 1901; *idem* 1903, 25-41; Getatchew Haile 1990.

¹⁸ Derat 2003, 94-95.

¹⁹ See the arguments extensively developed around this process in Derat 2003.

²⁰ Crummey 2000, 42-43; Derat 2003, 94-95 and 190 n. 70.

²¹ Crummey 2000, 25.

²² Zär'a Ya'eqob's decision to set up a more permanent settlement in Däbrä Bərhan to function as his capital, and to affiliate his own monastic foundations to Däbrä Libanos of Šäwa, increased the importance of Šäwa within the royal Solomonic domain (Derat 2003, 317).

²³ In a practice dating back to the beginning of Ethiopian Christianity in the fourth century CE. See Munro-Hay 1997.

²⁴ For a good discussion of the methodological problems posed by the use of hagiographical texts as reliable historical sources see Kaplan 1984, 1-14. Marie-Laure Derat has produced some good examples of the rigorous use of these sources (Derat 1999; *idem* 2003; *idem* 2006). Many of the events suggested by these Ethiopic texts can in fact be confirmed and more reliably dated by Arab sources. See Munro-Hay 1997; Tadesse Tamrat 1972, 307-308.

²⁵ Conti Rossini 1905; Crummey 2000, 25-26; *idem* 2006; Tadesse Tamrat 1972, 177-178.

²⁶ Turaiev 1906, 46 (fol. 37v), 51-52 (fols 41v and 42r), 56 (fol. 45v), 59-60 (fols 48r and 48v-fol. 49r).

²⁷ Tadesse Tamrat 1968; *idem* 1972, 206, 218-222 and 226.

Ἐστίφανος and his community refused to accept the theological and liturgical determinations agreed at the conference organized by Zār'a Ya'eqob at Däbrä Məṭmaq (ca 1450) in order to stamp out religious dissension²⁸. They appear to have retreated to the saint's home territory in 'Agamä, a region inhabited by the Irob people and now part of Təgray, which has traditionally been held to be the birthplace of the legendary Makədda, the Queen of Sheba²⁹. They settled in remote areas along the edge of the plateau³⁰, endowing their religious objections with a distinctly anti-monarchical stance by refusing to bow either to the Amhara king himself or to the images of Mary and the Cross that were now required, by royal command from Zār'a Ya'eqob, to be placed in every church and honoured with the Marian prayer³¹ during church services³².

According to Lusini, 'several copies of the *Gädlä Abrahām* are found in different localities in the Gär'alta and Ἐndārta provinces, and at least one of these manuscripts could trace back to the fifteenth century³³. They remain unpublished. I have so far had access to only one manuscript copy, made in the 1960s and donated to the Däbrä Ṣəyon monastery, where it is still kept. Textual evidence in this copy suggests that the narrative of the life of Abrahām was indeed written down in the mid-fifteenth century during the reign of Zār'a Ya'eqob and that his church of Däbrä Ṣəyon had been hewn out of the mountain during the reign of King Dawit I, Zār'a Ya'eqob's father, a claim not invalidated by recent archaeological evidence produced by David Phillipson³⁴. It appears, therefore, to have been one of the many churches fashioned in the Gär'alta-Ḥawzen area during the period of the Amhara take-over, and must be understood within the wider political and religious framework of the time. Given the existence of these several copies of the *gädl* in different locations, Abunä Abrahām himself appears to have been a well-known monastic leader in the region.

The narrative in the *gädl* clearly reflects the political tension that prevailed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries:

And the king [Yəshaq] arose and set fire to all their lands and they were all destroyed before his eyes. And all his troops rejoiced when they saw the destruction of his enemies, for the might of God was with him, their king. They took the pagans'

children captive, nor did he leave their women behind. And he plundered all of their land, and made a heap of the trophies of their forces. Those who remained he carried off in chains and shackles before the land, and they were booty before him, and he established many churches. And he founded monasteries for the monks and placed many troops there who were to guard that land³⁵.

Several passages in the *gädl* indicate that Abunä Abrahām favoured the new Solomonic dynasty, and his missionary endeavours, including the hewing-out of numerous churches, may have played a significant role in helping the new order to establish itself in the region. At the beginning of the narrative, Abrahām's parents are said to have originated in the upper echelons of Amhara society, before being sent to 'Məgray' (probably a copyist's error for 'Təgray') by King Säyfa Ar'ad in the third year of his reign (i.e. 1346-47)³⁶. The text also emphasizes the good relationship between Abrahām himself and Kings Dawit I and Yəshaq, describing how both rulers provided support for the holy man's missionary activities and the foundation of his numerous churches. His monastic community in

²⁸ Henze 2004; Kaplan 1984, 105; Tadesse Tamrat 1972, 38 and 220.

²⁹ Fattovich 1977, 6-18; Levine 2000, 109; Munro-Hay 1991, 36-37.

³⁰ Henze 2004, 26-27.

³¹ Getatchew Haile 1992; Kaplan 1984, 42; Mercier 2004.

³² Beylot 1970; *idem* 1984; Mordini 1954.

³³ Lusini 2003.

³⁴ Phillipson 2009, 106 and 188-190.

³⁵ *Gädlä Abunä Abrahām*, p. 89: ተንሥኦ ንጉሥ ወአውአየ ኩሎ አህጉሪሆሙ ወጠፍኡ ኩሎሙ እምቅድመ አዕይን ጉሁ ። ወተፈሥሐ ኩሎሙ ሠራዊቱ ። ሶበ ርእዩ ጥፍኦ ቶሙ ለጸላዕቱ እስመ ኃይለ እግዚአብሔር ሀሎ ምሰሌሁ ለንጉሥም ጼወወ ደቂቆሙ ለአረሚ ወአንስቲሆሙኒ ኢያ ትረፈ ። ወማሕረከ ኩላ ብሔሮሙ ። ወአስተጋብኦ ዕልገተ ኃያላኒሆሙ ። ወእለ ተርፋሂ ዘረዎሙ በሰናስል ወበጋጋት ውስተ ገጽ ምድር ። ወኮነ ኅብልያ በቅድሚሁ ወአንበረ ብዙኃነ አብያቲያናት [sic] ። ወሠርዓ ምኒታቱ ለመነኮሳት ወአንበረ ሠራዊተ ህየ ብዙኃነ እለ የአቅብዋ ለይእቲ ሀገር ። The word ዕልገተ 'algāt' ('trophies') means the severed genitals of the slain enemy taken as trophies.

³⁶ *Gädlä Abunä Abrahām*, p. 2: 'This father's ancestors were from illustrious lineages of the stock of the royal family of the Amhara, and by the command of God and the command of King Säyfa Ar'ad, in the third year of his reign he sent them to the land of Məgray ...' ዝንቱ አብ ኮነ አበዊሁ እምአበይተ ሕዝብ ክቡራነ ዘመድ እምሰብኦ ቤቱ ለንጉሥ እምቤተ አምሐራ በትእዛዝ እግዚአብሔር ወበትእዛዝ ንጉሥ ስይፈ አርአድ በግልስ አመተ መንግሥቱ ፈነዎሙ ምድረ ምግራይ...

Gär'alta received 'many things that were necessary for the church: vestments^[1] and curtains of green linen, a double red garment^[2], and a purple coloured...^[3], and all the silken vestments. And also for the needs of the community he [King Yəshaq] offered much gold and cattle and a large quantity of grain for them to be fed, and also he dedicated land and bestowed *gult*-lands by the order of his word.'³⁷

The church is specifically referred to in the *gädl* as a monastic church (*däbr*) named Zion (Ṣəyon)³⁸. This dedication to Maryam Ṣəyon (Saint Mary of Zion) reflects the growing importance of Mary – the new Zion, the new Ark of the Covenant – in Ethiopian religious perception at that time. It also

symbolically associates Abunä Abrəham's church with the most important church in Ethiopia, the cathedral built in the ancient royal city of Aksum in about the sixth century and likewise dedicated to Mary of Zion³⁹. The importance of Aksum Cathedral with its Marian dedication can be seen from the copies of early land grants preserved in the *Book of Aksum (Liber Axumae)*, ranging from the time of the semi-legendary Aksumite kings Abrəha and Aṣbəḥa, the supposed founders of the cathedral (although these documents may in fact be seventeenth-century forgeries), to probably genuine grants from the reigns of Säyfä Ar'ad (1344-1372) and Zär'a Ya'eqob (1434-1468)⁴⁰. The documents clearly associate Aksum Cathedral with Mary, the Ark of the Covenant and the notion of Zion. In the earliest grants, attributed to Abrəha and Aṣbəḥa, the cathedral is simply termed *gäbäzä Aksum*, 'Cathedral [literally 'guardian'] of Aksum'; whereas the grants supposedly issued by the shadowy Aksumite king Anbäsa Wädəm (ninth or tenth century) use the terms *Ṣəyon gäbäzä Aksum*, 'Zion, Cathedral of Aksum', or *ammənä Ṣəyon gäbäzä Aksum*, 'our mother Zion, Cathedral of Aksum'. As Munro-Hay argues, however, both forms probably refer to Mary, the 'Ark' in whose womb Christ was carried, as well as to the Zion church of Aksum itself⁴¹. Despite the fall of the Aksumite Empire and the decline of Aksum as a city, the fourteenth-century grants attributed to King Säyfä Ar'ad continue to mention fiefs bestowed upon the cathedral 'for the commemoration of my Lady Mary', although the designation 'Ṣəyon' is not added⁴². A later grant attributed to King Zär'a Ya'eqob, under whom the devotion to Mary became compulsory⁴³, brings all these elements together: 'Our mother Ṣəyon the Cathedral of Aksum... for the commemoration of my Lady Mary'⁴⁴.

The thirteenth-century *Kəbrä Nəgäšt (Glory of Kings)*⁴⁵ reinforces the perception of the city's enduring political and religious importance at that time by recounting the tradition whereby Mənilək, the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, brought the Ark of the Covenant ('Our Lady Zion') with the tables of Moses from Jerusalem to his mother's capital city, Däbrä Makədda (Aksum). The Arabic *Tārīḥ al-Kanā'is wa-al-Adyirah (History of Churches and Monasteries)*, a work initially attributed to Abū Ṣāliḥ the Armenian but now generally considered to have been written by the thirteenth-century Coptic priest Abū al-Makārim⁴⁶, also refers

³⁷ *Gädlä Abunä Abrəham*, p. 85: ፈነወ ለአረጋዊ ብዙኃ ንዋየ ዘይትፈቀድ ለቤተ ክርስቲያን ። መዋዋሐ ወመንጠ ዋልዓ ዘእምቢሰስ ወነት ክቡብ ወሕብረ ጸርከኖ ወቶሎ አል ባስ ሐሪር ። ወለትካዛ ማንበርሂ አምጽኦ ወርቀ ብዙኃ ወእ ልሕምተ ወእክለ ብዙኃ ዘይሴሰዩ ወምድረሂ አቡሰመ ወእ ጉለተ በትእዛዛ ቃሉ ። In relation to this passage, David Appleyard (personal communication) notes: "1. The word *motāht* (pl. as here, *māwateh*) means 'sheet, cloak, veil, coverlet, chasuble, stole' according to Leslau's dictionary. 2 The word *nāt* means 'a scarlet garment' or 'a leather mat'. 3 The word *därkäno* means 'purple or hyacinth blue' – the preceding word *həbr* just means 'colour' – so what item it refers to is unclear."

³⁸ The name is mentioned, for instance, in the passage from page 93 of the *Gädlä Abunä Abrəham* quoted below (see note 67).

³⁹ As David Phillipson points out, there are doubts as to the date when Saint Mary of Zion in Aksum was built and whether it was founded by King 'Ezana in the fourth century CE or King Kaleb in the sixth (Phillipson 2009, 37). For a discussion of the problems relating to the traditional dedication of this church, see Munro-Hay 2006, 759.

⁴⁰ Bertrand Hirsch and François-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar explain that the *Liber Axumae* was given its name by James Bruce in the eighteenth century, when he received a manuscript from Ras Mika'el Səḥul. It is a record of documents relating to the Church of Ṣəyon in Aksum, particularly royal grants to the cathedral (Hirsch/Fauvelle-Aymar 2001, 66). Carlo Conti Rossini produced a critical edition and translation (Conti Rossini 1909-1910).

⁴¹ Munro-Hay 2006, 159-160.

⁴² Munro-Hay 2006, 101.

⁴³ Getatchew Haile 1992; Kaplan 1984, 42; Mercier 2004.

⁴⁴ Getatchew Haile 1992; Munro-Hay 2006, 101-102 and 189; Perruchon 1893; Piovanelli 1995, 189-228.

⁴⁵ See Budge 1932, particularly chapters 103-104, which stress the importance of the *tabot* as the focal point of Ethiopian worship. See also Hubbard 1954, 327, and Ullendorff 1968, 83.

⁴⁶ I consulted Evetts's translation of the work supposedly by Abū Ṣāliḥ the Armenian (Evetts 1895). On the re-attribution of Abū Ṣāliḥ's supposed text to the Coptic priest Abū al-Makārim, see Atiya 1991, 23.

to Aksum's cathedral and the Ark⁴⁷, and the Portuguese missionary Francisco Álvares, who lived in Ethiopia in the 1520s, reported that the cathedral's altar stone, or *tabot*, was 'a stone from Mount Zion'⁴⁸. The continuing importance of Zion as a focus for devotion during the establishment of Solomonic rule over Təgray is also indicated by the chronicle of Zār'a Ya'eqob, which emphasizes that this king had chosen to be crowned in Aksum, where he scattered pieces of gold 'for the greatness of Zion'⁴⁹. It is not surprising, therefore, that the church stated by the *gädl* to have been carved out by Abunä Abrəham and his followers and endowed by the Amhara rulers was given the same dedication as that of Aksum's cathedral. It symbolically linked the new church in Gär'alta to the traditions of Aksumite royalty, bestowing political and religious legitimacy on this new monastic foundation.

ABUNÄ ABRƏHAM'S ROCK-HEWN CHURCH

Ideological, cultural and symbolic links with Aksum were also created by means of architecture. The decoration employed on the façade of Abunä Abrəham's church, for example, conspicuously imitates elements of Aksumite timber frame architecture, such as horizontal beams and projecting 'monkey heads' (see Pl. 1). Such features, which are rare in Təgray, had been adopted for certain churches built in the Lasta region by the Zagwe monarchs, who ruled prior to the establishment of the Amhara Solomonic dynasty in 1270. Examples are the rock-cut churches of Abba Libanos, one of the south-eastern group in the ceremonial centre of Lalibäla, and Zoz Amba, carved out of a flat-topped mountain (*amba*) 700 m above the Bäläsa plain, about 100 km WNW of Lalibäla⁵⁰.

The interior of Abunä Abrəham's church comprises a western antechamber (narthex or pronaos), and a large nave, four bays long by three wide, forming an irregular basilica measuring 12.5 by 8 metres and roughly 6 to 7 metres in height (Fig. 2). The north wall of the nave runs parallel with the external rock face. The wall panels of the bays are separated by pilasters, from which arches spring across to three pairs of columns standing in the nave. Each of the twelve spaces so formed is surmounted by a domed or vaulted ceiling. Unlike earlier rock-hewn churches, the sanctuary is not excavated as a separate architectural space; instead it occupies the three eastern bays of the nave and is

marked off today, as it would have been in the past, with curtains – like those presented as a gift to the church by King Yəshaq⁵¹. A monolithic altar stands in the central bay of the sanctuary, with a smaller, secondary altar in the south-eastern bay.

A doorway cut into the rock face functions as the main entrance, leading into the north-western corner of the nave. Two other doorways, cut at each end of the façade, lead into the ambulatory, a spacious tunnel carved deep into the mountain around the church, and reminiscent of a similar feature in the Lasta churches of Abba Libanos and Zoz Amba⁵². The *gädl* describes how Abunä Abrəham himself prepared the way for his followers ('children') to enter the rock, and how he marked out the ceilings:

'My children [said Abrəham], do not cease building the church, so that you may become the sons of the holy apostles.' [...] And having said this, he excavated this rock and showed the way how they might enter it and he marked out the vaults as he began in the area of the ceiling. And his children hastened, as he had ordered them, to construct the church towards the east and towards the west, [and] towards the sides⁵³.

The ambulatory preserves the diggers' original trajectory within the rock, passing round the church on three sides and giving access from inside the mountain to both the antechamber and the south-western corner of the nave, directly opposite the main doorway. Near the north-eastern end of the ambulatory, a small doorway in its eastern wall

⁴⁷ Evetts 1895, fols 105b, 106a (Arabic text on page 133): 'the Abyssinians possess also the Ark of the Covenant, in which are the two tables of stone, inscribed by the finger of God with the commandments which he ordained for the children of Israel'. See also Ullendorf 1968, 83.

⁴⁸ Álvares 1961, 151. See also Munro-Hay 2006, 102.

⁴⁹ Perruchon 1893.

⁵⁰ Lepage/Mercier 2002, 150; *idem* 2005, 155-156; Phillipson 2009, 104-106.

⁵¹ *Gädlä Abunä Abrəham*, p. 85. See note 37.

⁵² Lepage/Mercier 2002; Phillipson 2009, 106 and 143-145.

⁵³ *Gädlä Abunä Abrəham*, p. 81. ኢትዮጵያውያን ለቅዱሳን ሐዋርያት ቤተ ክርስቲያን ከመ ትኩሩ ውሉ ይመ. ለቅዱሳን ሐዋርያት [...] ወዘንተ ብሂሎ ወወቀራ ለይሉት ከኩሕ ወአርአየ ፍኖተ ለእንተ ኀበ ይበውእዋ ወአስተናደፈ. አቅማረሃ እስመ ወጠነ እመንግሥ ጠፈራ ። ወደቂቂኒ ተባደሩ በከመ አዘዙ. ለሐኒፀ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ቦእንተ ምሥራቃ ወቦ እንተ ምዕ ራባ ቦ እንተ ገበዋቲሃ ወተካፈ.

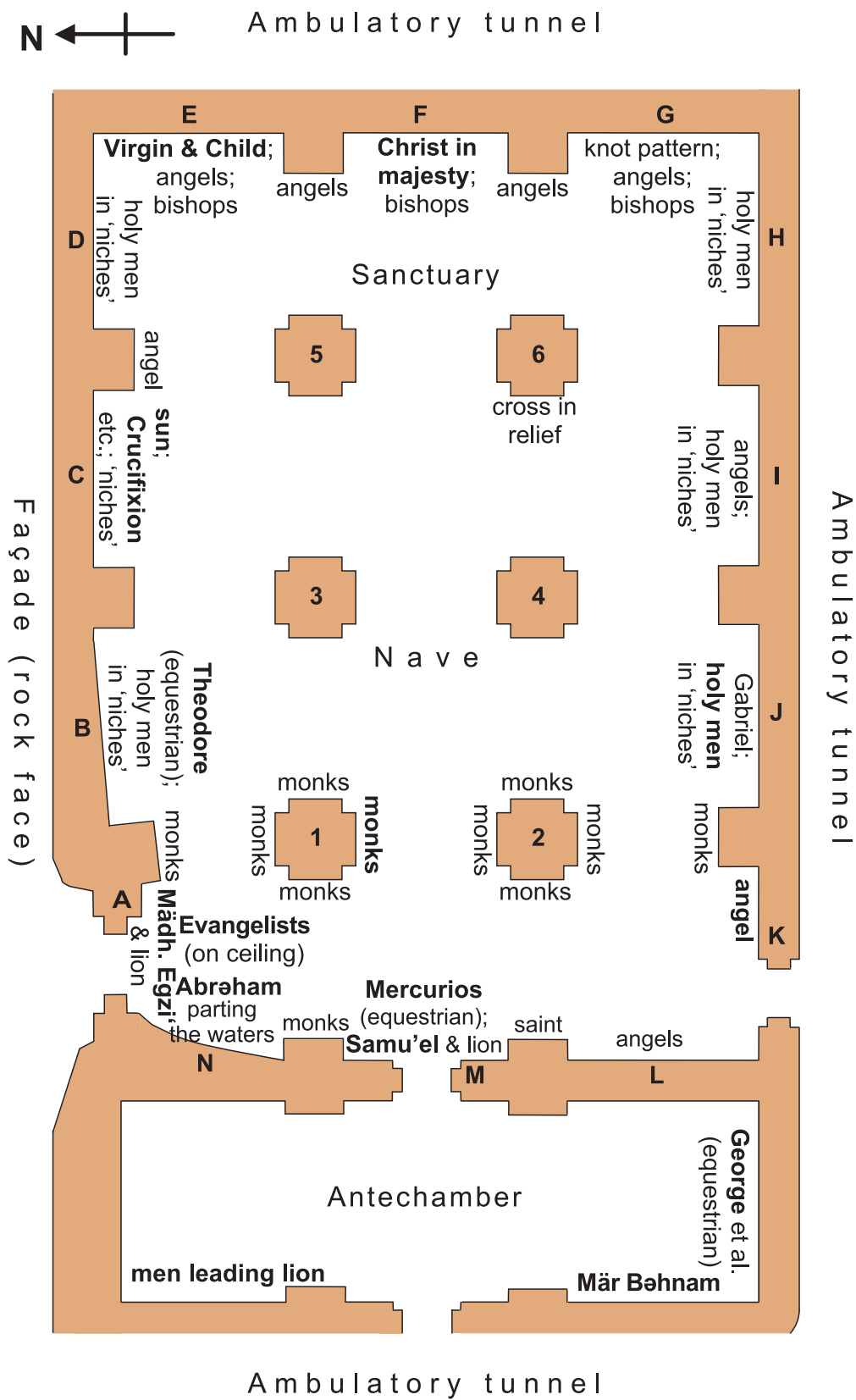


Fig. 2. Church of Abunä Abrāham Däbrä Šayon: schematic ground plan and iconographic diagram



Pl. 2. Däbrä Şayon, Abrahām's cell: bas relief of Virgin and Child (photograph Christopher Tribe, 1996)

leads into a womb-like cell, which is traditionally regarded as Abunä Abrāham's own cell and oratory⁵⁴. Its domed ceiling and circular wall are decorated with a variety of geometric patterns, while a large composition carved in the rock in low relief depicts the Virgin Mary seated with the Child on her left arm, flanked by the two angels, giving expression to the strong Marian devotion that was being fostered at the time (Pl. 2).

THE PAINTINGS: MONKS AND SAINTS

The walls, columns and ceilings of the nave and sanctuary were originally plastered, white-washed and entirely covered with wall paintings. As a result of severe infiltration and, at lower levels, abrasion, many of these paintings have now disappeared or are very poorly preserved; most of the inscriptions have faded badly (and/or were covered with thick reddish dust at the time of my visit), making them difficult to discern. Consequently, several of the surviving figures and motifs can no longer be identified with certainty. The few remaining fragments

of a painting at the top of wall N, for example, tantalizingly suggest a winged creature with lion's feet riding a horse; what was originally depicted is unknown. On stylistic, thematic and palaeographical criteria, the paintings that remain appear to have been made from soon after the church's foundation, at some time in the fifteenth century. The paintings in the nave and sanctuary include hagiographic narrative scenes, stylized figures of monks, martyrs, saints and angels, and episodes from the life of Christ, as well as intricate, non-figurative borders and patterns. On the basis of colour scheme and figurative details such as the depiction of noses, eyebrows, ears and hands, they fall into two main stylistic groups, the second of which is further subdivided.

⁵⁴ Georg Gerster suggested that the domed circular cell was a 'Bethlehem', the place where Eucharistic bread is made in Ethiopia (Gerster 1970, 84). As S. Chojnacki has pointed out, however, there is no reason to doubt the tradition that the domed room was Abunä Abrāham's own cell (Chojnacki 1983, 183).



Pl. 3. Däbrä Şayon, comparison of the two major hands (upper row) and three minor hands (lower row). Upper row, left to right: a) Hand A – the monks Abba Bəsoy and Abba Täwäldä Mädhən (nave, column 1, south face); b) Hand B – Saint Arkäledäs (nave, wall J). Lower row, left to right: c) Hand C – Evangelist (nave, ceiling of bay by NW entrance); d) Hand D – angelic figure (nave, topmost register of wall K); e) one of possibly three later hands in the antechamber – Märbəhnam the martyr (south end of west wall; photographs Christopher Tribe, 1996)

The first group comprises three surviving narrative scenes located above the entrance door (wall A), above the door from the antechamber (wall M) and on the interjacent wall (wall N); figures of monks on all faces of columns 1 and 2, on pilasters at the western end of the nave and on the pilaster between walls C and D; and perhaps also some holy figures in the bottom register of slightly recessed painted ‘niches’ along the south wall, although these are so poorly preserved that their attribution can only be tentative. This group is likely to have been the work of a single painter, here termed Hand A (Pl. 3a).

The second group, characterized in general by a more linear style, includes narrative paintings in the top registers of several of the nave walls (some now fragmentary); holy figures (saints, martyrs, bishops, angels) in painted niches on walls B to J, and on the ceiling of the bay by the north-west entrance; Marian and Christological scenes on walls C, E and F; and most of the non-figurative decoration in the church. Given their stylistic coherence, the majority of these paintings appear to have been produced by a single person, or perhaps a small team working under the guidance of a single master painter, referred to here as Hand B (Pl. 3b). The figures of evangelists on the ceiling above the north-west entrance are in a very similar style, but the lines are finer and certain features (particularly noses) are treated differently; they are the only extant examples of Hand C (Pl. 3c). The fragmentary scenes in the top registers of walls A and K are also the product of another painter (Hand D, Pl. 3d), and again have more in common with the style of Hand B than with that of Hand A. Some cruder devotional paintings and graffiti drawings in the antechamber appear on palaeographical and iconographical grounds to be somewhat later in date, possibly from the sixteenth century; the paintings may have been produced by two or three different hands (Pl. 3e).

Dominated by a limited ochre, green and pink colour scheme based on pigments likely to have been found locally, the paintings by Hand A combine portrayals of local monastic holy men with three narrative scenes focusing on key aspects of the lives of three important northern monastic leaders of the time: Abunä Abrāham himself, Mādhaninna ʿĒgziʾ, abbot of Däbrä Bānkʷäl (20 km west of Aksum), and Samuʾel of Wäldəbba (120 km south-west of Aksum), a disciple of the latter. Paintings by Hand A that decorate the columns and pilasters



Pl. 4. Däbrä Şayon, nave, column 1, south face: pairs of monks (photograph Christopher Tribe, 1996)

in four painted registers from floor to ceiling (the lowest of which are now badly deteriorated or missing in many cases) depict pairs of monks placed close together, either side by side staring out at the viewer, or face to face, gazing intently at each other (Pl. 4). The figures in these compositions are characterized by bulky round forms and oval faces with strikingly large eyes, some of which, due to fading and pigment loss, have now become white and hollow. There are no traces of individuality in these portrayals; rather, they are identifiable only by their names, where legible.

The monastic garb unifies all these compositions, connoting the qualities that were ideally required for the development of these monks as holy men, and functioning as a visual paradigm of ascetic behaviour. As indicated in the many Ethiopian *gädlät*, an ascetic, in the process of becoming a monk

(and in keeping with the Christian monastic traditions of Egyptian and Syrian origin, which had begun to permeate northern Ethiopia from around the sixth century onwards), was expected to strip himself of his inherited social identity – family, alliances, loyalties – and be reborn as a new social being, able to fulfil his new role⁵⁵. His rebirth as a monk, equated in the *gädlät* with an angel and perceived as a mediator between ordinary humans and the divine, was symbolized by his assumption of a new name, which figures prominently in the paintings. A further symbol was his new habit, which, despite some inconsistencies in terminology in this period⁵⁶, traditionally consisted of four main elements: the *qämis*, a long cotton or leather cloak, usually white but sometimes yellow⁵⁷; the *qənat*, the leather belt worn over the cloak⁵⁸; the *qob* (cap); and the *askema*, a scapular worn only by the most saintly of the monks, and ‘made up of two parts, one part resting on the breast and the other on the back, each ending with a large leather cross’⁵⁹.

In the paintings by Hand A, the component parts of the monastic garb are conveyed in seemingly arbitrary tones of ochre, green, pink and white, without illusionistically representing any real material or colour, such as the leather normally worn by monks at the time. These colours and the shapes of their cloaks, however, dominate the painted space in this part of the nave and visually unite the individuals portrayed into a single recognizable community sharing the same ideal moral and spiritual qualities. The close physical juxtaposition

in which these monastic figures are portrayed on the columns and pillars – some of them so close that their noses almost touch – indicates the highly emotional quality that coloured the relationships within communities of Ethiopian monks. In particular, disciple and master were said, in Ethiopian hagiographies, to come together ‘in a spiritual embrace’⁶⁰. This collection of portraits mimics the genealogies which are preserved in the Ethiopian *gädlät*, going right back, as in the *Gädlä Abunä Abrəham* itself, to the first Egyptian ascetics, Anthony and Macarius, whose practices inspired the emergence of Ethiopian asceticism.

Like post-iconoclastic Byzantine art, which created new formal visual idioms for the portrayal of types of soldiers, monks, bishops, apostles and evangelists, grouping them according to their degrees of corporeality, motion and emotive response⁶¹, the paintings by Hand A at Däbrä Şəyon also found a new visual language to represent the ‘exemplary types’ sanctioned by their society. The figures echo the models portrayed in the contemporary hagiographical narratives and dedicatory inscriptions, visually establishing ideal ‘patterns of behaviour’, which in turn derive their authority precisely from their function as paradigmatic models⁶². Architecturally as well, the columns on which these saints are painted function as yet another common metaphor – also employed in Ethiopian hagiographies and present in the decoration of many other painted churches of the same period – visually recalling the monks’ ascetic qualities of uprightness and martyrdom. The *gädl* of Saint Täklä Haymanot, for instance, recounts how he fulfilled his resolution to ‘stand up like a pillar’ within his tiny cave for years on end, until his leg fell off⁶³.

Like the *gädlät*, the iconography created by Hand A contextualizes the monastery’s regional situation, selectively portraying the holy figures deemed significant for the construction of the monastery’s own particular genealogical line. The links with Egyptian asceticism are clearly stated in the *Gädlä Abunä Abrəham* itself, which refers to both Saint Anthony and Saint Macarius, the fourth-century founder of Deir Abū Makār in the Egyptian desert at Wadi Natrūn⁶⁴. This connection with Egypt is reiterated in many of the names borne by the monks portrayed. Among them, for instance, are Abba Fiqtor (Victor, on column 1, north face) and Abba Abib (on the pilaster between walls M and N), names that recall Egyptian martyrs

⁵⁵ Kaplan 1984, 75.

⁵⁶ Tadesse Tamrat 1972, 165.

⁵⁷ Tadesse Tamrat 1972, 164.

⁵⁸ Guidi 1901, col. 283, cited by Tadesse Tamrat 1972, 164 n. 3.

⁵⁹ Guidi 1901, cols 445–446, cited by Tadesse Tamrat 1972, 164 n. 5.

⁶⁰ The expression appears, for instance, in Budge 1906, 207: ‘... Abba Yohannis (Fol 144 b.1) went out to receive him with joy; and when our father the holy man Takla Haymanot saw him, he bowed low before him, and they embraced each other with a spiritual embrace’ (my italics).

⁶¹ Maguire 1996, 65.

⁶² See Heffernan 1988, 87.

⁶³ Budge 1906.

⁶⁴ *Gädlä Abunä Abrəham*, p. 29: ‘Come, you who have followed in the footsteps of Ἐνῑonyos and Μäqaryos.’ **ገዑ አለተለውከሙ አሰረ እንግዮስ ወወቃርዮስ ።**

included in the Ethiopian *Synaxary* (*Sənkəssar*) that had recently been compiled⁶⁵.

Ethiopian names are also found, as is the case of Abba Tāwäldä Mädhən, on the south face of column 1 (see Pl. 3a). The figure with whom he shares the composition is of particular importance for the construction of this local genealogy: this is a certain Abba Bəsoy (a name of Egyptian origin), the monk who, according to the text of the *gädl*, had conferred the monastic garb upon Abunä Abrəham and given him his monastic name:

And afterwards he wished to become a monk. And Abba Bəsoy, the follower of our father/Abunä Gäbrä Mämfäs Qəddus, came to him that he might bestow on him the monastic costume which is the vestments of angels. And when he came to him, our father/Abunä Bərhanä Mäsqäl said to him, 'Allow me my first name and do not change it', and he said to him, 'No, it is not so, rather I shall change it as Our Lord changed the names of His disciples, and so I shall of necessity name your name one of three: Abrəham, Pawlos [or] Yohannəs'; and they drew lots [with] 3 crosses and they duly named him Abrəham⁶⁶.

This biographical referencing continues in the three remarkable figurative-narrative scenes by Hand A that still survive in the nave, near the main entrance and the doorway to the antechamber. On wall N, one of the scenes narrates a miraculous episode in the later life of Abunä Abrəham, as told in his *gädl*, in which the saint, while returning to Däbrä Şəyon one day, displayed his powers even to influence nature by parting the overflowing waters of a river:

He received the great riches of grace that had not been given to (other) men and as he was returning from Sähart to go to Däbrä Şəyon, he came upon the great river called Gəbä [?] Gəba]. And he found the river was in full flood and a torrent. There were many people with him and they did not know what to do, but His Holiness stood by the bank of the river and made the sign of the cross with his staff over the flood and the waters of the great river parted to each side. And all those who were there crossed over and praised God that they had gone with the new Moses who had cleaved the flood and led the people. Now, this our father let his children cross over and led them through the gulf and let them cross as if it was dry land. And those who were there rejoiced, and then he reached his community safely⁶⁷ (Pl. 5).

The composition is organized in two registers placed within an almost square pictorial space. The lower register depicts fishes swimming against a dark blue background. In the top register, on the left-hand side, the large figure of Abrəham, enveloped in his white monastic cloak and holding a hand-cross in his left hand, is shown standing on the bank and parting the waters below with his long staff-cross. Four other monks witness the miracle. The pictorial arrangement is held together by one of the monks portrayed in full frontal position directly above the partition of the waters, which is visually represented by a vertical swathe of ground colour cutting through the blue. This monk holds his staff upright and stares out of the picture, drawing the viewer's gaze into the scene. As in the text of the *gädl*, the 'parting of the waters' scene draws a clear parallel between the powers of Däbrä Şəyon's monastic leader, Abunä Abrəham, and those of the biblical Moses, who parted the waters of the Red Sea as he led the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt.

Such typological associations between prominent local figures and events and those of the Gospels are frequently found in Ethiopian hagiographies. They created metaphorical ties that shaped the new Christian lifeworld that was being introduced into the still largely un-Christianized regions of the

⁶⁵ The main textual body of the *Sənkəssar* was translated from Arabic into Gə'əz in the fourteenth century but the addition of Ethiopian saints' lives was a later feature in an expanded version. See Budge 1928.

⁶⁶ *Gädlä Abunä Abrəham*, pp. 31–32: ወእምድኅሬሁ ፈቀደ ከዊነ ከዊነ [sic] መነኮሰ :: ወመጽእ ኅቡሁ አባ ብሶይ ረድኡ ለአቡነ ገብረ መንፈስ ቅዱስ ከመ ይልብሶ አልባሰ ምንኩስና እንተ ይእቲ አጽፈ መላእክት :: ወሶበ በጽሐ ኅቡሁ ወይቤሎ አቡነ ብርሃነ መስቀል ኅድግ ሊተ ቀዳማዊ ስምዖ ወኢትወልጥ ወይቤሎ አኮ ከማሁ አባ [p. 32] እቁ ልጥ ዘከመ ወለጠ እግዚእነ አስማቲሆሙ ለአርደኢሁ ወእ ሰሚ ስመከ በተአጽቦ ፩ እም ፫ ቱ አብርሃም ጳውሎስ ዮሐንስ ወገብሩ ዕፃ ፫ ቱ መስቀል ወበድልወት ሰመይዎ አብርሃም

⁶⁷ *Gädlä Abunä Abrəham*, p. 93: ረከበ ሐብተ ጸጋ ዓቢይ ዘእተወበ ለእንላ እመሕያው ወእንዘ ይትመየጥ እምሰሐርት ለሐዋር ደብረ ደብረ [sic] ጽዮን በጽሐ ኅበ ዓቢይ ፈለግ ዘይስመይ ግበ :: ወረከበ እንዘ ትትሃየል እምልኦት ፈለግ ወውሂዝ :: ወሐለጢ ብዙኃን ሰብእ ምስሊሁ ወኃጥኡ ዘይገብሩ ወብፁዕሰ ቆመ ውስተ ኅበ ድንጋጋ ፈለግ ወአማዕተበ በምርጉዞ መልዕልተ ባሕር ወተከፈለ ማየ ፈለግ ዓቢይ ለፌ ወለፌ :: ወአደጢ ክሎሙ እለ ህየ ሀለጢ ወአዕኩታዎ ለእግዚአብሔር እስመ ሐሩ ምስለ ሙሴ ሐዲስ ዘሰጠቃ ለባሕር ወመርሐሙ ለሕዝብ :: ወዝንቱስ አቡነ አዕደምሙ ለደቂቁ ወመርሐሙ ፍኖተ ቀላይ ወአዕደምሙ ከመ ዘየብስ :: ወተፈሥሑ እለ ህየ ሀለጢ ወእምዝ በጽሐ ውስተ ማኅደሩ በሰላም

time, forging a new rhetoric that validated the indigenous Christian figures, and consequently helping to foster political transformations. Abunä Abrəham is depicted much larger than the other figures, his importance and holiness connoted by his towering visual presence, as well as by a now badly damaged Gəʿəz inscription beneath the monks' feet, which may read: '... by the observance of the Gospel he [Abunä Abrəham] fulfilled the ten commandments'⁶⁸ – just as Moses had done in the Old Testament. Inscriptions identifying Abunä Abrəham's companions are now illegible. On the right-hand side, however, it is still possible to distinguish a blessing addressed to a certain Tāklä Giyorgis, who probably commissioned the cycle of paintings and may have been the immediate successor of Abunä Abrəham⁶⁹: 'May the blessing of the holy fathers protect our father (Abunä) Tāklä Giyos [*sic* for Giyorgis?] with all his disciples. Amen'⁷⁰.

Two companion scenes placed on the adjacent walls A, above the main entrance door to the nave, and M, above the doorway to the antechamber, depict miraculous episodes from the lives of two famous early fifteenth-century holy men of northern Ethiopia. These are, respectively, Mādhaninna ʿĒgziʾ, founder of the monastery of Däbrä Bānkʿwāl⁷¹, who lived during the reigns of Kings Wädəm Arʾad (1299-1314), ʿAmdä Šəyon (1314-1344) and Säyfa Arʾad (1344-1372); and his disciple, Abunä Samuʾel, abbot of Wäldəbba, a monastery situated in the region of Səmen, just south of the Tākkäze river from Təgray⁷². Both these holy men rejected Ewostətewos's observance of the Sabbath and

played an important political and military role in support of the Amhara rulers⁷³. The paintings portray them as wondrous spiritual leaders who, like Abrəham himself, were able to tame nature and protect their communities.

On wall A, Mādhaninna ʿĒgziʾ is represented exerting his spiritual power over a lion, blessing it with his right hand and presenting his hand-cross with his left (Pl. 6). The lion is shown laden with pottery jars. The scene refers to an episode in which the saint, like Aaron the Syrian, forced a lion that had eaten his donkey to make a daily journey to his monastery carrying jars full of water⁷⁴. Close by, on wall M, Samuʾel of Wäldəbba, Mādhaninna ʿĒgziʾs disciple, is depicted returning a lion cub to its mother (Pl. 7). A now fragmentary inscription identifies the scene, emphasizing the saint's spiritual power: '... Abunä Samuʾel, you cover him as with the clothing of his heart... and make him sit with the blessed doves [a common metaphor for monks] in Däbrä Šəyon, the temple. Amen'⁷⁵.

These two paintings give visual form to a common topos in Ethiopian hagiographical literature. As Steven Kaplan notes, the Ethiopian monastic holy man, in his ideal role as a mediator between humanity and the divine, was seen to command the respect and submission of wild animals, protecting people and property from attack, while at the same time enjoying a special bond with various members of the animal kingdom⁷⁶. As in the wider Christian hagiographical tradition, going back to Athanasius's *Life of Saint Anthony*, on which the Ethiopian *gädl* format is considered to have originally been based⁷⁷, examples of such powers abound in the Ethiopian *gädlät*, no doubt also reflecting the reality of life in the remote areas where the saints operated. The holy man Tadewos, for instance, saved his nephew Filmona from the attack of a lion; while Filmona himself slew two snakes who entered his cave during Lent seeking to attack him⁷⁸. And among Tāklä Haymanot's most famous miracles is the episode in which the children of Mugar were protected against being devoured by a panther by invoking the name of the then dead saint⁷⁹.

There were also political overtones associated with this choice of iconography, as there is evidence that both Mādhaninna ʿĒgziʾ and Samuʾel of Wäldəbba – contemporaries of Abunä Abrəham – played a significant role within the violent political environment that characterized the gradual assertion of Amhara royal power in the northern regions

⁶⁸ The text appears to read: ... **ዋ... ይዘሩ በዓቂበ ወንጌል ፡ ፈጽመ ፡ ትእዛዛት ፡ ዓሰሩ ፡**

⁶⁹ Lepage/Mercier 2005, 150.

⁷⁰ **በረከተ ፡ አለ ፡ አበው ፡ ቅዱሳን ፡ ትመግቦ ፡ ለቡቡን ፡** [*sic*] **ተክለ ፡ ጊዮስ ፡ ዘምስለ ፡ ከሎሙ ፡ ደቂቁ ፡ አሜን**

⁷¹ The *gädlä Mādhaninna ʿĒgziʾ*, which remains unpublished, is held in the Fonds Conti Rossini 13. See Kaplan 1984, 137.

⁷² Taddesse Tamrat 1972, 226.

⁷³ See Turaiev 1902 and the *gädlä Mādhaninna ʿĒgziʾ*, unpublished, Fonds Conti Rossini 13.

⁷⁴ Lepage/Mercier 2005, 150; Henze 2008.

⁷⁵ **አቡነ ፡ ሳሙኤል ፡ ትከድኖ ፡ ከመ ፡ እንተ ፡ ልብስ ፡ ለሱ ፡ ...ማከ ፡ ወታርፍቆ ፡ ምስለ ፡ ቡሩካን ፡ አርጋብ ፡ በደብረ ፡ ጽዮን ፡ መቅደስ ፡ አሜን**

⁷⁶ Kaplan 1984, 87.

⁷⁷ Tesfaye Gabre Maryam 1997.

⁷⁸ Allotte de la Fuye 1958. See Kaplan 1984, 87 and 142.

⁷⁹ Budge 1906, Vol. II, 295.

Pl. 5. Däbrä Şayon, nave, wall N:
 Abunä Abrahām parting the waters of
 the River Gāba (photograph Christopher
 Tribe, 1996)



Pl. 6. Däbrä Şayon, nave, wall A:
 Mädhāninna ʿġzi commanding the
 lion to carry water (photograph Christopher
 Tribe, 1996)



Pl. 7. Däbrä Şayon, nave, wall M:
 Abba Samu'el (of Wäldäbba) returning
 a lion cub to its mother (photograph
 Christopher Tribe, 1996)



during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Although a Təgrayan, Mädhāninna ʿġziʿ was a disciple of Tāklä Haymanot, whose influence extended well beyond his southerly homeland of Šäwa⁸⁰, and he is said to have lent his aid to King Säyfä Arʿad during this king's campaigns against the Muslim rulers of Nubia⁸¹. The king recognized his role by granting a large area of *gult* land to his monastery of Däbrä Bänkʷäl, as recorded in charter number eight in the *Liber Axumae*⁸².

Like his teacher, Samuʿel also became known for playing an active role in the politics of his day and supporting the Amhara ascendancy in Təgray. He is believed to have miraculously appeared on the battlefield like an angel, fighting on the side of Dawit I and predicting the king's victory over his Muslim enemy⁸³. According to the Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī (1364-1442), such fighting took place in 1403, when Dawit pursued the sultan of ʿAdal, Saʿdaddīn II, to Zaylaʿ, killing the sultan and sacking the town⁸⁴. Although another contemporary source dates the death of Saʿdaddīn to 1415, in which case it would have been at the hands of King Yəshaq instead⁸⁵, for the purposes of our argument there is sufficient textual evidence to support the notion of a political association between Samuʿel of Wäldəbba and the Amhara rulers.

Oral accounts of a visit paid by five monks from Tāklä Haymanot's Däbrä Libanos (Däbrä ʿAsbo) monastery in Šäwa to Wäldəbba monastery in the north at that time indeed suggest links between Samuʿel's monastery and the wider monastic network that supported Amhara rulership⁸⁶. Such a

tradition is reinforced by a version of the *Gädlä Tāklä Haymanot* written at Wäldəbba at some time between the reign of Yəshaq (1414-1429) and the beginning of the sixteenth century⁸⁷. This northern version places emphasis on Tāklä Haymanot's evangelizing activities in Təgray, which he is said to have carried out at the time of his initiation into monastic life in the Təgrayan monastery of Däbrä Damo⁸⁸. The fact that this version of the *Gädlä Tāklä Haymanot* makes reference to the Sabbath (which would only be officially adopted by the Ethiopian church after 1449⁸⁹, as a result of King Zär'a Ya'eqob's efforts to achieve theological consistency at the Council of Däbrä Məṭmaq) further situates the time of Wäldəbba's entry into the monastic and political network led by Tāklä Haymanot to the mid-fifteenth to early sixteenth century⁹⁰. This was the time when Hand A at Däbrä Šəyon visually associated Abunä Abrəham's foundation with these other two politically important northern monasteries, Däbrä Bänkʷäl and Wäldəbba.

GAZING INTO PARADISE: MARTYRS AND WARRIOR SAINTS

In contrast to the didactic overtone directly concerning the founder and his political relations that pervades the iconography created by Hand A at the western end of Däbrä Šəyon, a devotional idea of martyrdom dominates the images produced by the other painters in the remainder of the nave and sanctuary. Hand B depicted numerous angels, saints and martyrs on the walls and pilasters, as well as scenes with equestrian saints high up on walls B and M, just below the domed and vaulted ceilings decorated with intricate geometrical patterns and motifs. All this work shows the same delicate linear style, employing unmodulated shades of white, black and green pigments, with a little grey and ochre; in contrast to most of the compositions by Hand A, hands and faces are not strongly tinted, and the figures portrayed appear less solid and corporeal.

In the equestrian composition at the top of wall B, an angel guides the aim of the rider of a dappled horse as he spears a monstrous serpent that coils into a knot beneath the horse (Pl. 8). He is watched by a second rider, who is clearly identified by the inscription: '... a picture of Qəddus Gälawdəyos' (Saint Claudius – ሥዕል : ቅዱስ : ገላውድዮስ :). A text beside the angel seems to suggest: 'thrust a

⁸⁰ Derat 2003, 106. See also Budge 1906, Vol. I, 189-190 and Vol. II, 77.

⁸¹ *Gädlä Mädhāninna ʿġziʿ*, unpublished, Fonds Conti Rossini 13, 44-50, 88-99.

⁸² Conti Rossini 1909-1910, charter number 8.

⁸³ Turaiev 1902, 14. See Kaplan 1984, 63.

⁸⁴ See Henze 2000, 67.

⁸⁵ Trimmingham explains the discrepancy in the sources: Trimmingham 1952, 74.

⁸⁶ Collected by Girma Elias in the 1970s. See Derat 2003, 36.

⁸⁷ Conti Rossini 1894, 100. See also Derat 2003, 36.

⁸⁸ Conti Rossini 1894, 133-134. This version of the *gädl* also lists Tāklä Haymanot's monastic genealogy, going back eight generations to Yedla, who had been born in Amhara and subsequently migrated to Šäwa (Conti Rossini 1894, 102).

⁸⁹ Conti Rossini 1894, 136.

⁹⁰ Derat 2003, 36.

spear' (መልአኅ ፡ ኩናት ፡). The identity of the rider spearing the snake is problematic since the accompanying inscriptions are now badly faded; the one above and beside the horse's head appears to read: '... [is seen] as he killed the devil' (...ለዚ ከመ ቀተሎ [?] ለዲያብሎስ ፡). The saint portrayed is likely to be Təwodros (Theodore), a Roman general (*stratelates* or, in Gə'əz, *liqā sārāwit*) also known as 'the Egyptian' because his father was from Upper Egypt; to save the sons of a Christian widow from being devoured, he speared to death a huge serpent that was terrorizing the city of Eukitos⁹¹.

At the top of wall M, an equestrian saint spears another rider, watched by two holy figures, one female and one male (Pl. 9). No inscriptions survive to identify the onlookers, but the victorious saint can be unambiguously identified as Saint Mercurios from the inscription naming his defeated enemy, 'Ulyanos the treacherous' (ኡልያኖስ ፡ መምሳይ ፡), that is, Julian the Apostate, the last non-Christian Roman emperor. The sixth-century chronicler Malalas recounts how Basil, the Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, dreamt that Mercurios had slain Julian at Christ's command⁹². This same iconographic theme had been included in the cycle of wall paintings decorating the church of Gännätä Maryam, situated in the region of Lasta not far from the Zag'we centre of Lalibāla, and believed by most authorities to have been executed in the late thirteenth century, on the basis of an inscription identifying the central figure in a scene in the nave as King Yəkunno Amlak (ca 1270-1285), the first of the new Amḥara rulers⁹³.

The imagery of protective equestrian saints had probably been adopted in response to Ethiopian Christians' precarious co-existence with the many different populations and forms of worship around them, particularly Muslims⁹⁴. Such imagery may also have resulted from the contact that Ethiopians maintained with the outside world, through which they became aware of images of mounted saints that had long decorated churches along the borders of the Byzantine Empire, from Cappadocia to Georgia and Egypt, since before the fourth crusade (1204)⁹⁵. The fourteenth-century Ethiopian holy man Ewostatewos, for instance, is said by his *gädl* to have died in Armenia, having first travelled in Nubia, Egypt, Jerusalem and Cyprus after leaving his home region of Təgray⁹⁶. Kings Dawit I and Zär'a Ya'eqob are known to have sent embassies to Cairo⁹⁷, enabling Ethiopians to come into contact

with the equestrian saints decorating the walls of Egyptian monasteries like Deir Anba Antonius near the Red Sea, Deir al-Suryān in Wadi Natrun, and Deir al-Shohada near Esna⁹⁸.

Ethiopians had also had a long-standing presence in Jerusalem, where they kept a monastery⁹⁹, and Abunä Abrəham himself had, according to the *gädl*, been prevented from going on pilgrimage there by King Dawit I¹⁰⁰. A delegation of four Ethiopians attended the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1445), brought in from Jerusalem by the Franciscan friar Alberto da Sarteano, the apostolic commissioner for India, Egypt, Ethiopia and Jerusalem¹⁰¹. Ethiopians are also known to have been part of the multicultural society of the Lusignan Kingdom of Cyprus; they took their place among Franks, Greeks and Copts in Famagusta in the fourteenth century, where they joined the influx of refugees – Armenians, Nestorians, Jacobites, Georgians, Nubians and Indians – that had been arriving from Syria since the latter half of the thirteenth century¹⁰².

⁹¹ Chojnacki 2004, 77.

⁹² John Malalas, *Chronicle* 13.25, in Jeffreys *et al.* 1986, 181-182.

⁹³ Balicka-Witakowska 1998-1999; Lepage 1975. More recently Balicka-Witakowska has argued that there is no conclusive evidence that the church and the paintings were co-terminous after all, or even that all the paintings in the cycle were done at the same time (Balicka-Witakowska 2007). In addition, David Phillipson places the date for the fabric of this 'hypogean church' sometime between 1050 and 1300, in which case the paintings were not necessarily contemporary (Phillipson 2009, 116 and 188-189). Whether or not King Yəkunno Amlak built it, though, it is clear that the mere appropriation of the building by this new king would have been a significant political act, and that the cycle or cycles of paintings, in addition to being aesthetically important, were also rhetorically relevant at the end of the thirteenth century, and possibly 'trend-setting'. I will be re-assessing these paintings and placing them within their wider cultural context in a forthcoming book on Ethiopian cycles of wall paintings produced between the thirteenth and the seventeenth centuries.

⁹⁴ For studies of military saints within the Byzantine cultural domain see Snelders/Jeudy 2006 and Walter 2003.

⁹⁵ Gerstel 2001, 271-272; Weitzmann 1966, 71-72.

⁹⁶ Turaiev 1906, 43, 46, 51-52, 57-59.

⁹⁷ Erlich 2002.

⁹⁸ Snelders/Jeudy 2006 acknowledge their relationship to Ethiopian examples.

⁹⁹ See Cerulli 1943-1947.

¹⁰⁰ *Gädlä Abunä Abrəham*, 41-44.

¹⁰¹ Beckingham 1994, especially 80-82; Tedeschi 1989. For a general study of the Council of Florence see Gill 1961 and, more recently, Minnich 2005; *idem* 2008.

¹⁰² Schabel 2005, 161-163.



Pl. 8. Däbrä Şayon, nave, wall B:
Saint Gälawdäyos (Claudius) and
Saint Theodore (?) slaying a serpent
(photograph Christopher Tribe, 1996)



Pl. 9. Däbrä Şayon, nave, wall M,
top register: Saint Mercurios spearing
Julian the Apostate (photograph
Christopher Tribe, 1996)

In Syria, Mat Immerzeel has persuasively argued against Erica Cruikshank Dodd's attribution of the re-naming of the monastery of Mar Musa al-Habashi (Saint Moses the Ethiopian) to the arrival of Ethiopian monks pushed out of the remote Valley of the Qadisha, in Lebanon, by the Maronites in 1488¹⁰³. In Lebanon, however, the available textual and archaeological evidence does indicate that in the fifteenth century Ethiopians had shared with the local Jacobites the church and hermitage of Mar Assia¹⁰⁴. Sheltered in two caves of difficult access overlooking the southern side of the Qannubin Valley, the site possesses a spring of fresh water in the first cave which is still regarded as curative, thus explaining the dedication to Mar Assia, a saint whose name derives from the Syriac word *Osyō*, meaning a medical doctor¹⁰⁵. Significantly for the argument developed here, a Gə'əz inscription found in the apse of the hermitage in 1990 and dated to the same period of time provides empirical evidence for the Ethiopian presence in the region¹⁰⁶. It indicates, in the words of H. Charaf and A. Chaaya, that the Jacobites seem to have displayed the 'first direct intercultural exchanges between different peoples in Qadisha' by welcoming the Ethiopians and sharing with them 'their own cult place dedicated to a commonly worshipped saint'¹⁰⁷.

Through sharing in the multi-cultural milieu of the eastern Mediterranean, Ethiopians would easily have come into contact with the crusader workshops and painters of Cyprus, Sinai, Lebanon and Syria, as well as artists in Egypt, Georgia and Armenia, and they would have seen the votive equestrian portraits of saints and martyrs that had long been widespread in the region. Mat Immerzeel has demonstrated that the imagery of oriental equestrian saints was already popular well before the thirteenth century as part of a theme belonging to the wider eastern repertoire, and it was only subsequently adopted by the crusaders; this is shown by several pre-crusader examples from Egypt and Syria (as in Deir Mar Musa al Habashi)¹⁰⁸. The first known image of Saint George as an equestrian saint rather than a standing general is apparently from Georgia, and his cult enjoyed growing popularity in Egypt, Syria and Palestine during Crusader times¹⁰⁹. It is particularly significant for the present argument that, according to Charaf and Chaaya, the interior of the apse of the church of Mar Assia in Lebanon is plastered with 'Ethiopian frescoes depicting a

figure (perhaps St George)¹¹⁰; these frescoes will be analysed in a future paper.

Not only did Ethiopians travel abroad, but foreigners including Armenians, Greeks and Venetians are also known to have worked in Ethiopia. The Egyptian influence on Ethiopian art and culture of the Solomonic period has long been recognized by a number of scholars¹¹¹. Marilyn Heldman has pointed out the undeniable influence of Egyptians on the artistic centre that emerged in the Amhara monastic centre of Däbrä Hayq Ḥṣṭifanos in the thirteenth century¹¹². The importance of crusader imagery in Ethiopia in that period and of Ethiopian cultural links with Syria and Egypt is clearly revealed in the iconography and style chosen for the cycles of paintings decorating the Lasta churches of Gännätä Maryam, mentioned above, and the nearby Ḥmäkina Mädhane 'Aläm. The iconography in these churches includes equestrian saints such as George, Theodore and Mamas (mounted on a lion as he is represented in Cyprus¹¹³) and, in the church of Ḥmäkina Mädhane 'Aläm, the Mesopotamian saint Mar Behnam ('Märbəḥnam'), revealing Ethiopia's connections with the Eastern Christian

¹⁰³ Immerzeel 2007, 127. For Erica Cruikshank Dodd's arguments see Cruikshank Dodd 2000 and Cruikshank Dodd 1992, especially 126-127 and n. 75.

¹⁰⁴ Charaf/Chaaya 2002, 46-47.

¹⁰⁵ According to Charaf and Chaaya, 'Mar Assia's real name was Pantalaimon, a doctor from Nicomedia in Asia Minor, who lived in the 4th c. and attended the poor for free after his conversion to Christianity. He was martyred in 303 A.D. Syriac, Maronite, Melkite and Ethiopian Christians worship Pantalaimon' (Charaf/Chaaya 2002, 47). According to Mat Immerzeel, however, there is disagreement about this theory, which has also been propagated by Jean-Marie Fiey in his studies about Syrian saints; there is, therefore, no proof that either Mar Assia from Antioch – the doctor or the monk – was the same person as Pantalaimon from Nicomedia (personal communication; see Fiey 2004, 58).

¹⁰⁶ Charaf/Chaaya 2002, 46-47; Jacob 1996.

¹⁰⁷ Charaf/Chaaya 2002, 46-48. As the authors explain, 'after the expulsion of the Monophysites from Qadisha, the Maronites took over the site in the 16th c. At present, the site is completely abandoned and left in ruins' (p. 48).

¹⁰⁸ Immerzeel 2004.

¹⁰⁹ Folda/French 1982, especially 194-195; Folda 1995, 403; *idem* 1997, 395.

¹¹⁰ Charaf/Chaaya 2002, 47.

¹¹¹ On the contacts between Ethiopia and Coptic Egypt in the period in question see, for instance: Doresse 1970a; *idem* 1970b; Munro-Hay 1997; Tedeschi 1969.

¹¹² Heldman 1994, 93-96.

¹¹³ See Immerzeel 2004, 34.



Pl. 10. Church of Ḥmäkina Mädhane 'Aläm: the Mesopotamian saint Mar Behnam, 'Saint Märbəḥnam the martyr'.
(© Michael Gervers 2002. *Mäzgäbä Səəlat: Treasury of Ethiopian images*, MG-2002.116:010,
<http://ethiopia.deeds.utoronto.ca/>)

world (Pl. 10)¹¹⁴. Later, under the influence of Nicolò Brancalon (ca 1460-after 1526), a Venetian artist who arrived in Ethiopia in 1480 at the time of King Ḥskändär (1478-1494)¹¹⁵, the association between the martyrdom of Saint George and the miracles of the Virgin Mary became an established iconographic motif in Ethiopian painting, which was widely repeated until the eighteenth century and beyond¹¹⁶.

Both Jaroslav Folda and Erica Cruikshank Dodd have attributed the spread of the visual motifs associated with equestrian saints to the values of chivalry that pervaded the Kingdom of Jerusalem¹¹⁷. Such values were, of course, culture-specific, and as a result the reception of these chivalric images in regions as diverse as Georgia, Egypt and Ethiopia must also be understood to have taken place within equally culture-specific environments. Portrayals of Ethiopian warrior saints – whether produced in centres hostile to Amḥara royal power, such as the Stephanite monastery of Gundä Gunde¹¹⁸, or in communities sympathetic to the Solomonic cause, like those of monastic churches in core Amḥara regions or at Abunä Abrəḥam Däbrä Šəyon – were modelled on local Ethiopian warring practices: riding barefoot and armed preferably with a spear. Such images upheld the military ethos of what had, since Aksumite times, been essentially a warrior society, which expected courage in combat and

¹¹⁴ See Balicka-Witakowska 1998/1999; *idem* 2004. For a substantial discussion of the Mosulian tradition of Mar Behnam see Snelders (forthcoming).

¹¹⁵ Mercier 2000, 104.

¹¹⁶ Mercier 2001, 56.

¹¹⁷ Cruikshank Dodd 1992; *idem* 2000; Folda 1995; *idem* 1997; Folda/French 1982.

¹¹⁸ Gundä Gunde paintings done around 1500-1520 show George, Theodore, Victor, Claudius and other 'saint martyrs who defeated the devil' (Mercier 2000, 87).

placed great value on the achievements and spoils of battle¹¹⁹. These values were important elements in the social and political organization of the Christian kingdom, as expressed in the fact that high-ranking officials often bore military titles¹²⁰. The inevitable conceptual and formal Ethiopianization undergone by these received images of equestrian saints must be understood, I suggest, against the background of the fourteenth-century wars waged notably by Kings 'Amdä Šəyon and Sāyfä Ar'ad against the Betä ʾĪsra'el (Ethiopian Jewish communities) in the north and the Muslim sultanates of Ifat and 'Adal in the east.

Hand B also decorated the nave (walls B to J) with a series of shallow, recessed niches showing figures with elongated faces and expressive dark eyes; each one was named in an inscription, in many cases now faded beyond recognition, particularly in the lowest register. The niches decorating wall J, for instance, celebrate the Ethiopian saints Gäbrä Krəstos and Arkäledäs¹²¹, Awsanyos the Martyr, Yoštos the Martyr, and Aboli, the son of Yoštos (አባሊ ወልዱ ለዮስጦስ) (Pl. 11; for a detail of Arkäledäs, see Pl. 3b). These saints and martyrs are presented as true icons, portrayed in the beatific state they were believed to have achieved at the end of their spiritual strife, and turned into spiritual mediators between the world inhabited by humans and their own angelic dimension. They are all depicted in a bluish green and white colour scheme in similar frontal positions, holding visual attributes like the Scriptures, a chalice or a cross, which function to establish the typological relation between the Saviour's sacrifice and their own martyrdom. In many cases the figure points at the sacred object with his other hand, reiterating this connection.

The vision of the eternal glory to be achieved through martyrdom and asceticism and shared with the angels and archangels, in the company of the resurrected Christ, is connoted in the painted niches in the holiest part of the church, the eastern or sanctuary wall. In the lateral bays, the niches are organized in three registers, creating a spiritual hierarchy. The lowest level shows a row of holy men, whose pointed hoods identify them as bishops¹²², while the niches in the second and third registers contain angels and archangels, one of them still with his name inscribed: Sura'el (Pl. 12). In the northern bay of the east wall (wall E), the three rows of niches are surmounted by a further painted register showing Mary with the Child on her lap,

flanked by the angels Gabriel and Michael (Pl. 13). The equivalent position in the southern bay (wall G) is occupied merely by geometric knot patterns, but a similar theophanic composition appears in the central bay of the sanctuary (wall F) replacing the third row of niches: a portrayal of Christ in majesty, surrounded by the four Zoa and framed by angels (Pl. 14). Although modest in dimensions and execution, it appears immediately above the principal altar and provides the focal point of the church. Whether deliberately or not, these two paintings by Hand B – the Virgin and Child, and Christ in majesty – not only display visions of the promised eternal salvation that awaits the ascetic holy man at the end of history, but also, I suggest, embody the important theological-ideological requirement demanded by Zär'a Ya'əqob at the time: to promote the worship of Mary and the regular placement of two tabots (arks or altars) in all churches, one for Jesus and one for his mother.

The two theophanic scenes on the sanctuary wall contrast with the narrative of Jesus' human aspect and its relationship to the divine Logos portrayed by paintings decorating wall C; situated in the nave proper, they prepare the initiate for the apotheosis on the sanctuary wall. The three scenes in the second register on wall C, unfortunately now in very poor condition, narrate the Crucifixion, the Entombment and finally the Harrowing of Hell (Pl. 15). Above this register, two angels provide a visual link between the earthly space of Jesus'

¹¹⁹ Stuart Munro-Hay has emphasized the warring nature of Aksumite culture (Munro-Hay 1991, 215-217), while Tadesse Tamrat and Richard Reid have emphasized the continuing nature of this warring ethos in Ethiopian society right down to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Reid 2006, 90; Tadesse Tamrat 1972, 95-96). See also Donham 1986, 7.

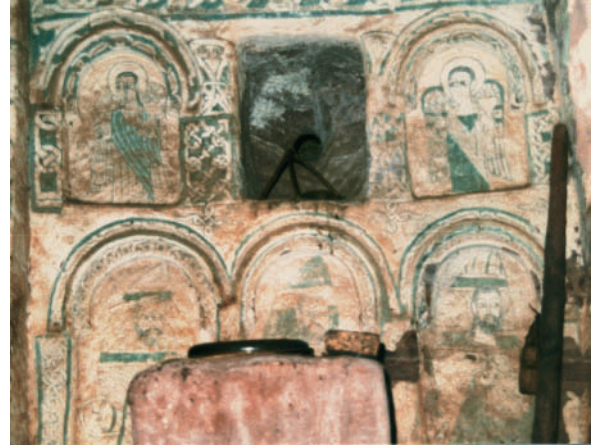
¹²⁰ Tadesse Tamrat 1972, 96.

¹²¹ This is probably Saint 'Arkäledäs, who was the abbot of the Təgrayan monastery of Sälamge, not far from Däbrä Damo, in the third quarter of the fourteenth century (Conti Rossini 1938, 410-411 and 434). The spelling of his name found here in the inscription on Wall J (አርከሊ ደስ) differs from that used in the manuscript consulted by Conti Rossini (ዓርከሊ ደስ) particularly in that the initial Gə'əz pharyngeal 'A (ʾ) is replaced with the glottal 'A (አ). This confusion leads me to speculate that the painter may have come from Amhara rather than Təgray, since the two characters have become homophones in Amharic, whereas they remain phonetically distinct in Tigrinya (as in Gə'əz).

¹²² For securely identified comparative material, see Balicka-Witakowska 1984-1986, Figs 2, 3, Pl. II.



Pl. 11. Däbrä Şəyon, nave, wall J: 'niches' with (left to right, upper register) saints Gəbrä Krəstos and Arkäledäs, and (middle register) martyrs Awsanyos, Aboli and Yostos (photograph Christopher Tribe, 1996)



Pl. 12. Däbrä Şəyon, sanctuary, wall G: 'niches' with angels in the upper register and bishops in the lower (photograph Christopher Tribe, 1996)



Pl. 13. Däbrä Şəyon, sanctuary, wall E: Virgin and Child, flanked by the angels Gabriel and Michael (photograph Christopher Tribe, 1996)

sacrifice and the metaphysical level of his divine existence. High up on the wall above these angels, the sun, portrayed as a human face, offers a vision of God as a solar entity, accompanied by an enigmatic

inscription which seems to read: 'Where the sun hid its light, when she... his Lord'¹²³ (Pl. 16).

Use of this solar image in Ethiopia dates back at least to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, since it is found in a number of churches in the Amhara regions of Wag and Lasta that either date from that period or were built/excavated earlier and simply appropriated and decorated then, including Yəmrəḥannä Krəstos, Betä Maryam (Lalibäla) and Gännätä Maryam, and in at least one other church in the Gäralta area, Däbrä Maryam Qorqor¹²⁴. The importance of this image becomes clear from a passage in the *Qäleməntos* ('Our Lord talking to Saint

¹²³ ፀሐይ : ኀበ : ሰወረ : ብርሃኑ : ሶበ : ርእ...ቶ : ለተእግ ለኢሉ. The translation of this inscription assumes ብርሃኑ *bərhanu* ('its light') stands for the more grammatically correct ብርሃኑ *bərhanu*. The sixth word in particular is very difficult to read: the first, second and fourth characters suggest it should be ርእየቶ *rə'əyāto* ('she saw him'), but the third character does not look like a የ, and there appear to be no other meaningful options (David Appleyard, *in litt.*).

¹²⁴ Phillipson 2009, 186, 189, 190.

Peter'), the seven-book Revelation of Peter to Clement of Rome which was claimed as canonical by some Ethiopian authorities¹²⁵. The passage in question encapsulates the Ethiopian understanding of the sun and solar imagery as denoting the Trinity: 'My Father is sun, I his light and the Holy Spirit his heat'¹²⁶. King Zär'a Ya'eqob, however, considered that three suns, each possessing all attributes, similarly and equally, would more clearly illustrate the existence of three distinct persons in the Trinity, while his theological (and political) opponents insisted on the imagery of one sun with three attributes, its disc representing the Father, its light the Son and its heat the Holy Spirit. Such disputes, however, gradually died out. Any rejection of the *Qälemāntos* was short-lived, and there is evidence that by the sixteenth century it was not considered heretical¹²⁷.

That this solar face embodies the Ethiopian concept of the Trinity is again made clear in the Pentecost scene painted in the church of Yəmrəḥännä Krəstos, not far from the Lalibäla complex of churches (Pl. 17). The sun face of God the Father hovers at the very top of the scene; from Him the power of the Holy Spirit, depicted as a bird, descends upon the Apostles in the form of rays of light, representing the 'tongues of fire' mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles¹²⁸. Solar imagery connoted important metaphoric values, and provided the appropriate analogical references required for the explanation of difficult metaphysical concepts – such as the notion of beauty, which in the *Gädlä Abunä Abrəham* is conveyed in terms of 'love' or 'shining like the sun'.

HEAVENLY BEAUTY ON EARTH

The *gädl* clearly states that Abunä Abrəham embarked on his missionary and building activities in response to an express command from King Dawit I, who prevented the holy man from going on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and ordered him instead to stay in Ethiopia and build churches¹²⁹. Many other monasteries are in fact attributed to Abunä Abrəham's missionary activities in eastern Təgray, such as the Saviour of the World (Mädhane 'Alām) at Addi Qäšo, Saint Michael at Barka, and Saint Mary at Həb'əto. Some, as pointed out by Lepage and Mercier, display either similar carved decorations to those in the oratory at Däbrä Şəyon, or the same kind of niches with painted portraits, as in the

Church of Saint George at nearby Däbrä Mä'ar¹³⁰. The Däbrä Şəyon project appears to have played a singularly important role in this extensive missionary process: it had the greatest impact and was especially singled out in the *gädl* as an example of direct divine revelation, expressed through architecture: 'Then God showed him in [his] imagination a church, beautifully constructed, and before he should build it He first put the image in his mind and showed him its construction, [and] he rejoiced in his spirit and was glad in his heart.' Later, 'they accomplished the construction of the vault and the ceilings, and they were ready to begin the centre of the vestibule. And he marked out the pillars and it [i.e. the church] was revealed to him as in the vision from one end to the other'¹³¹.

The *gädl* gives some insight into the monks' feelings as they toiled to hew such a large, complex structure out of the living rock: 'And they made haste to build it because they were eager to do the wishes of their father.' Abrəham, meanwhile, 'would inspect them urging them on with God's words, "You, my children, shall have a building in heaven; as you have laboured a while, so shall He give you a beautiful reward in His kingdom"'¹³². During the excavation the holy man lost his sight, causing his 'children' to weep as they faced interruption of the work. Nevertheless, as the *gädl* states, 'the church was finished, the height and the width

¹²⁵ Bausi 1992. See also Cowley 1974.

¹²⁶ Transliterated from the Gə'əz as: *Abuyä zähay, wä-anä bərhanu wä-Mänsfäs Qəddus wä'əyu*. From *Qälemāntos*, book 2, chapter 2, quoted by Getatchew Haile 1981, 108.

¹²⁷ The *Qälemāntos* is included in the *Mäzmurä Krəstos* ('Psalms of Christ'), a compilation of hymns written in 1582 or earlier by Abba Baḥray (British Museum MS Or. 534; Wright 1877, no. 128, p. 82) (Getatchew Haile 1981, 108). For a fuller study of the *Mäzmurä Krəstos* see Getatchew Haile 2007.

¹²⁸ Acts 2:3.

¹²⁹ *Gädlä Abunä Abrəham*, pp. 41–44.

¹³⁰ Lepage/Mercier 2005, 159.

¹³¹ *Gädlä Abunä Abrəham*, p. 78: ወእምዝ ኦርኦዮ እግዚአብሔር በመጽሐት መንፈስ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ሕንጽተ ስርጉተ ዘእንበለ ይሕንጻ አቅደመ ስዒለ ውስተ ሕሊናዮ :: ወእርኦ ሕንጽታ ተፈሥሐ በመንፈሱ ወተኃሥዮ በልቡ :: and p. 82: ወእሰነዩ ሕንጽተ ቀመራ ወአጥፋረሃ ወአጋዙ ይወጥኑ ክርስ ማዕማዲ :: ወእስተናደፈ አዕማዲ ወተከሥተት ሎቲ በዘመር እያ እምጽንፋ እስ ጽንፋ ::

¹³² *Gädlä Abunä Abrəham*, p. 82: ወአስተፋጠነ ለሕንጽታ እስመ ጉጉዓን እሙንቲ ለገበረ ፈቃዱ ለአቡዎሙ :: ወውእቲኒ ይዋሀዮሙ እንዘ ያሰተዓባዮሙ [sic] በነገረ እግዚአብሔር ብዘመ ደቂቅዮ ሕንጽ በዘሰማያት በእንተ ዘጸመውክሙ ዓስበ ሠናዮ በውስተ መንግሥቱ



Pl. 14. Däbrä Şayon, sanctuary, wall F:
Christ in majesty, above the main altar draped with
cloths (photograph Christopher Tribe, 1996)



Pl. 15. Däbrä Şayon, nave, wall C: scenes showing
(left to right) Christ's crucifixion, entombment and
harrowing of Hell (photograph Christopher Tribe, 1996)



Pl. 16. Däbrä Şayon, nave, wall C: sun image
(photograph Christopher Tribe, 1996)



Pl. 17. Pentecostal image from the church of
Yəmrahannä Krastos, Lasta (© Michael Gervers 2002.
Mäzgäbä Səəlat: Treasury of Ethiopian images,
MG-2002.107:020, <http://ethiopia.deeds.utoronto.ca/>)

and all the sheltered parts and open spaces, within a year and nine months¹³³ – a period of time that may well have been possible, given the workable nature of the local sandstone¹³⁴. Later, during the feast of the Ascension, Abrahām's sight was restored 'at the moment of the entry of the *tabot*... and he saw the church in its entirety and all the people who were gathered for the feast rejoiced'¹³⁵. The outcome of all the work left no doubt in the hagiographer's mind as to the unique architectural status of the church: 'And all those who have seen it say there is nothing which resembles it at this time and even the first churches do not resemble it'¹³⁶.

In contrast to the perceived importance of the architecture, the painted decoration is not mentioned in the *gädl*. Nevertheless, the wall paintings created an important visual vehicle for the theological beliefs and political allegiances of the time. Placed like icons on the walls and columns, the representations of holy men and martyrs expressed the heightened importance that had begun to be attributed to the visual as an instrument of devotion at the time of Kings Dawit I and, particularly, Zär'a Ya'eqob. The latter strongly argued, against rival theologians, that God has a *mälkä* (image or form)¹³⁷. Fostered by both rulers, the use of portable icons had begun to spread in Ethiopia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and must have contributed to the spread of Christianity in what were often still largely un-Christianized regions¹³⁸. In the *gädl* of the fifteenth-century saint Mäba'ä Şəyon, for instance, the saint's childhood is marked by his devotion to a portable icon of Our Lady Mary, which a travelling monk had inadvertently left in the child's father's house¹³⁹. Similarly, in the *Gädlä Ewostatewos*, a monk declares: 'I was then in the land of Enfraz and I was praying while I was carrying a picture of our Lady Mary with her beloved Son, and pictures of Michael, Gabriel and the great martyr George, and pictures of our father Ewostatewos, and our father Absadi, and our father Mäqaryos, and our father Zäkaryas, and our father Romanos, and our father Tāwäldä Mādhen, and our father Fiqtor, and our father Mätta'...' ¹⁴⁰.

Represented as embodiments of the ideal qualities demanded by their ascetic life, the holy figures portrayed in Däbrä Şəyon arguably provided a visual parallel to the *mälkä* ('beautiful form') used in the *sälam* (praise) poetry dedicated to saints¹⁴¹. The following example exalts Saint Tāklä Haymanot:

*When our father Takla Haymanot is mentioned, men are adorned as the heavens, and as the earth is adorned with the beauty of flowers. How shall I ever be able to draw a picture of thee accurately, and how shall I ascribe blessings unto thee adequately, o my blessed lord, who didst fear God, and who didst desire His commandments exceedingly? May thy seed become strong ...*¹⁴².

The growing significance of icons for the devotional life of the time is fully expressed in the church's antechamber, a room separate from the nave, where different hands, maybe pilgrims, drew often crude linear figures of saints and martyrs in tones of ochre and green. These unrefined drawings and paintings functioned as moving requests for personal salvation, expressed in spontaneous, improvised graffiti statements that gave visible form to the saints addressed. On the basis of their clothing (reminiscent of similar outfits depicted in the securely dated sixteenth-century Gär'alta church of Abunä Yəm'atta Guḥ¹⁴³) and the palaeography of the accompanying inscriptions, a pair of equestrian figures on the south wall may date from the late fifteenth or sixteenth century. They represent an unknown saint (his name may have been inscribed in a now damaged area) with Saint George, who is

¹³³ *Gädlä Abunä Abrahām*, p. 82: ወተረጸመት ይእቱ ቤተክርስቲያን ፡ ኑሃ ወግድማ ፡ ወክሎ [sic] አጽዋኒሃ ወመራህ ብቲሃ በዓመት ወበ፱ ወርኅ

¹³⁴ In 1998, villagers hewed out a new church in Harärəgwa in a matter of months (Lepage/Mercier 2005, 159).

¹³⁵ *Gädlä Abunä Abrahām*, p. 83: ወጊዜ ግብአተ ታቦት ተከሥታ አዕይንቲህ ወርእየ ክላንታሃ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ወተረሥሎ ክሉ ነሐሣብ እለ ተጋብኡ ለበዓል

¹³⁶ *Gädlä Abunä Abrahām*, p. 83: አለቦ ዘይመስላ በዝንቱ መዋዕል ወቀደምትኒ አብያተ ክርስቲያናት ኢይትማሰላሃ

¹³⁷ Getatchew Haile 1981, 124-125.

¹³⁸ Kaplan 2002, 410.

¹³⁹ Budge 1898, 3. See also Kaplan 2002.

¹⁴⁰ My translation from Turaiev's Latin rendering of the Gə'əz manuscript: 'Eram quidem in terra 'Enfrāz et precabar, ferens imaginem Dominae nostrae Mariae cum dilecto Filio eius, et imagines Michaelis, Gabrielis et Georgii archimartyris, et imagines patris nostri Eustathii, et patris nostri Absādi, et patris nostri Mercurii, et patris nostri Zachariae, et patris nostri Romani, et patris nostri Tawalda Madhen, et patris nostri Victoris, et patris nostri Matthiae' (Turaiev 1906, 87).

¹⁴¹ Rundgren 1984.

¹⁴² Budge 1906, Vol. II, 315.

¹⁴³ For the dating of the paintings in Abunä Yəm'atta Guḥ, see Chojnacki 1983, 128; Gerster 1970; Lepage/Mercier 2005, 170-179.

identified by the inscription: ‘The image of Giyorgis the Martyr. May his prayers be with Gäbrä Maryam’¹⁴⁴ (Pl. 18). It hints at the growing importance of this equestrian saint in Ethiopia, which was to lead to the gradual emergence of an elaborate Georgian iconographic cycle in the fifteenth century, and his association with the cult of Mary¹⁴⁵. Another devotional portrait sketched in this antechamber (at the south end of the west wall) is accompanied by the inscription: ‘The image of Märbəhnam the Martyr. May his prayers be with us’¹⁴⁶ (Pl. 3e). On the northern part of the west wall, a painting of two unidentified men leading a lion on a rope contextualizes the nature of the existential anxieties experienced at the time, which often seem to have been expressed in terms of a conflict between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’, the surrounding wildlife being perceived as threatening and fearsome – a fact which adds significance to the portrayal of Mädhāninna ʿĪgzi’ and Samu’el of Wäldəbba as holy men endowed with the power to tame nature (Pl. 19).

The narrative compositions painted by Hand A inside the entrance to the nave, tackling the wondrous aspects associated with the life of the saints portrayed, had a didactic value as well, in addition to their devotional role. They recalled what Douglas Burton-Christie terms the ‘pedagogy of spiritual direction’ of the early Christian Egyptian desert ascetics, a hermeneutic and teaching process founded on deeply emotional rather than intellectual values. Burton-Christie emphasizes the role of Scripture in the formation of ascetic ideology in early Christian Egypt. In turn, this ideology influenced the development of traditional educational practices within Ethiopia, which favoured oral instruction and

memorization based on Scriptural models, notably the Psalms of David and the Gospels during the early stages of education in particular¹⁴⁷. Such religious teaching – which is still practised – valued personal experience, the exchange of words between elder and disciple and the frequent use of metaphors to convey subtle layers of interpretation, culminating in the ‘wax and gold’ tradition of interpretation, involving the use of subtle metaphorical and figurative language¹⁴⁸. Learning and engaging with the Scriptures was regarded as the first step in deepening the monk’s grasp of the meaning of the ascetic life, and questions from disciples were often answered with sayings or stories, creating explanatory analogies. In this context, like a written sacred biography, the stories told in the three narrative paintings by Hand A exemplify the highest level of spiritual power that monks could endeavour to achieve and their ability to wield authority over nature, and thus offer desirable paradigms to be attained through ascetic practices.

The decorative cycles in Däbrä Şəyon offer a less refined and more austere formal impression than that offered by some other churches in Təgray, such as the nearby church of Däbrä Maryam Qorqor, where formally sophisticated paintings convey a complex theological message largely inspired by visual models of Byzantine and Nubian origin¹⁴⁹. They also differ from the decoration in churches linked by the emergence of a recognizable style, such as the cluster of painted churches in Lasta that includes Gännätä Maryam, ʿĪmäkina Mädhane ʿAlām, Wašša Mika’el and others¹⁵⁰.

Despite the fact that Abunä Abrəham is said by the *güdl* to have inspired the building of many other churches¹⁵¹, the paintings done by Hand A at Däbrä Şəyon seem to have been the distinctive product of a single individual monk, whose work remained an innovative, if unrefined contribution, which does not appear to have spawned followers. The formal language employed in the three narrative scenes, in particular, is exceptional in the evolution of Ethiopian wall painting of this period. It does not engage with the visual stimuli that were arriving from abroad at the time – particularly from Egypt and even Venice – and which influenced the highly sophisticated icons painted by the fifteenth-century Lake Ṭana monk Färe Şəyon, in what became a sophisticated court style at the time of King Zär’a Ya’əqob¹⁵² (Pl. 20). Hand A appears, instead, to have taken a fresh and unmediated gaze

¹⁴⁴ ሥዕል : ጊዮርጊስ : ሰማዕት : ጸሎቱ : ተሀሉ : ምስሉ : ገብረ : ማርያም ።

¹⁴⁵ Bosc-Tiessé 2008, 153; Budge 1930; Heldman 1989; *idem* 1994, 175-176.

¹⁴⁶ ሥዕል : መርብህናም : ሰማዕት : ፡ የቄቡነትን : ምስሉን ።

¹⁴⁷ Burton-Christie 1993. See also Arras 1967 and van Esbroeck 1975.

¹⁴⁸ Levine 1965, 5.

¹⁴⁹ Tribe 1997.

¹⁵⁰ Balicka-Witakowska 1998-1999; *idem* 2004; *idem* 2007; Lepage 1975; Mercier 2002.

¹⁵¹ See Lepage/Mercier 2005, 159, regarding similarities with these other churches.

¹⁵² For an excellent study of this patronage process see Heldman 1994.



Pl. 18. *Däbrä Şayon, antechamber, south wall: Saint George (photograph Christopher Tribe, 1996)*

at what he saw around him – monks, wild animals and the landscape they inhabited – and attempted to note down this immediate experience with visual markers that were still uncoded and largely his own. He thus produced a unique, unsophisticated method of visual storytelling through his individual painting style. His compositions created a counterpoint to the Abunä Abrahām *gädl*, giving recognizable visual form not only to the monastic network centred at Däbrä Şayon in the fifteenth century but also to some of the oral traditions relating to Abunä Abrahām and his fellow missionaries themselves, shaping their idealized physical appearance.

Hands B, C and D also developed a distinctive visual style and colour scheme. Rather than the narrative style and didactic iconography favoured by Hand A, however, they covered the space of the nave and sanctuary with devotional icons, offering a vision of the eschatological brilliance to be encountered at the end of time, and firmly situating Mary at the centre of it, side by side with Christ. Some now badly damaged paintings by these hands in the



Pl. 19. *Däbrä Şayon, antechamber, north end of west wall: two unidentified men leading a lion on a rope. The man on the left is painted on a pilaster and the remainder of the scene on the adjacent wall (composite photograph, Christopher Tribe)*



Pl. 20. *Follower of Färe Şayon: Diptych of Virgin and Child flanked by archangels, with apostles and Saint George. Ethiopia, Təgray, late fifteenth century. Tempera on panel, 22.5 × 19.8 cm (left), 25.6 × 19.7 cm (right). The Walters Art Museum 36.12. (Photo © The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore)*

more westerly bays of the nave appear to frame the narrative cycle by Hand A. The ceiling above the main entrance is divided by a patterned cross into four sections, occupied by depictions by Hand C of what appear to be the four Evangelists (only two and part of a third now survive) (see Pl. 3c). The remaining fragment of a painting at the top of wall J, probably by Hand B, portrays the archangel Gabriel, part of a scene that may originally have represented the Annunciation or the Virgin framed by Gabriel and Michael. Should either hypothesis be correct, and considering that Christ's sacrifice is presented in the middle register of wall C (Pl. 15), we may speculate that these paintings create an additional layer of discourse, re-telling the cosmic

story of Jesus' birth and death, his life on earth and his theophanic apparition in heaven. The event of Christ's theosis is reinforced by the surviving fragment of a scene painted by Hand D at the top of wall K, where a head encircled by a cruciform nimbus must represent a Person of the Trinity¹⁵³ (Pl. 3d). The accompanying inscription, although difficult to read, seems to begin: 'How Christ appeared...'154. Another fragment to the right of this shows a very large orant figure, now unidentifiable, which may have represented Mary¹⁵⁵. This figure would have faced worshippers as they entered the church.

Even without speculating about the connotations that might have been provided by these now badly damaged or missing parts of the cycle, enough remains of the other paintings to argue that they situate the lives of these Ethiopian holy men, in particular Abunä Abrāham, within the divine cosmological environment created in the church by Hands B, C and D, giving the political aspects of their missionary activities a clearly recognizable place within the divinely ordered world of the Gospels. Together, the two levels of discourse created by the whole ensemble of paintings – the 'earthly' dimension of the paintings by Hand A at the western end and the 'cosmological' dimension in the rest of the church – produced a visual celebration both of the local monastic community and of the devotional and theological beliefs that sustained it, validating their missionary activities and turning Abunä Abrāham's principal foundation into a singularly important *lieu de mémoire*¹⁵⁶.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abba Tewoldemedhin Yosef 1969, 'Introduction générale aux églises monolithiques du Tigray', in: *Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa, Vol. 1, 83-98.
- Allotte de la Fuye, M. 1958, *Actes de Filmona* (CSCO 181-182, Script. Aeth. 35-36), Louvain.

¹⁵³ Chojnacki 1990.

¹⁵⁴ ስኬት : አክቲርአዮ : ክርስቶስ : ...

¹⁵⁵ A somewhat similar figure is illustrated, for example, in Balicka-Witakowska 1984-1986, Fig. 18.

¹⁵⁶ For good discussions re-assessing the relevance of Pierre Nora's concept of 'sites of memory' (*lieux de mémoire*) in the African context see Chrétien/Triaud 1999. Marie-Laure Derat's contribution (Derat 1999) is of particular relevance to the argument developed in this paper.

- Álvares, F. 1961, *The Prester John of the Indies: a true relation of the lands of the Prester John: being the narrative of the Portuguese embassy to Ethiopia in 1520* [Ho Preste Joam das Indias: verdadeira informação das terras do Preste Joam, segundo vio & escrueo padre Francisco Aluarez capella del Rey nosso senhor, Lisbon, 1540]. The translation of Lord Stanley of Alderley, 1881, rev. and edited with additional material by G.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford, Cambridge.
- Arras, V. (ed.) 1967, *Patericon Aethiopice*, CSCO 277-278, Aeth. 53-54, Louvain.
- Asfawossen Asrat 2002, 'The rock-hewn churches of Tigray, Northern Ethiopia: A geological perspective', *Geoarchaeology* 17 (7), 649-663.
- Ariya, A.S. 1991, 'Abu al-Makarim', *CE* 1, 23.
- Balicka-Witakowska, E. 1984-1986, 'Un psautier éthiopien illustré inconnu', *Orientalia Suecana* 33-35, 17-48.
- Balicka-Witakowska, E. 1998-1999, 'Les peintures murales de l'église rupestre éthiopienne Gännätä Maryam près Lalibela', *Arte Medievale*, 2nd Series, nos 12/13, 93-209.
- Balicka-Witakowska, E. 2004, 'The Wall-paintings in the Church of Mädhane Alām near Lalibāla', *Africana Bulletin* 52, 9-29.
- Balicka-Witakowska, E. 2007, 'The Wall-paintings in the Sanctuary of the Church of Gannata Maryam near Lalibala', in: S. Chojnacki, W. Raunig, Asfa-Wossen Assefate (eds), *Ethiopian Art: a unique cultural heritage and modern challenge*, Lublin (Bibliotheca Nubica et Aethiopica 10), 119-137.
- Balicka-Witakowska, E., M. Gervers 2001, 'The Church of Yemerehanna Krestos and its Paintings: a preliminary report', *Africana Bulletin* 49, 9-47.
- Bausi, A. 1992, *Il galementos etiopico. La rivelazione di Pietro a Clemente. I libri 3-7*, Naples.
- Bausi, A. 1999, 'Appunti sul Gadla Libanos', *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* 12 (2), 11-30.
- Bausi, A. 2003, *La 'Vita' e i 'Miracoli' di Libanos*, 2 vols (CSCO 595-596, Script. Aeth. 105-106), Louvain.
- Beckingham, C.F. 1994, 'Ethiopia and Europe 1200-1650', in: C.H. Clough, P.E.H. Hair (eds), *The European Out-thrust and Encounter: the First Phase c. 1400 – c. 1700: Essays in Tribute to David Beers Quinn on his 85th Birthday*, Liverpool, 77-97.
- Beylot, R. 1970, 'Un épisode de l'histoire ecclésiastique de l'Éthiopie. Le mouvement stéphanite. Essai sur chronologie et sa doctrine', *Annales d'Éthiopie* 8 (1), 103-116.
- Beylot, R. 1984, 'Sur quelques hétérodoxes éthiopiens. Estifanos, Abakerazun, Gabra Masih, Ezra', *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 201 (1), 25-36.
- Bosc-Tiessé, C. 2008, *Les Îles de la mémoire: Fabrique des images et écriture de l'histoire dans les églises du lac Tānā, Éthiopie, XVII^e-XVIII^e siècle*, Paris.
- Budge, E.A.W. 1898, *The lives of Maba' Sēyōn and Gabra Krēstōs: the Ethiopic texts edited with an English translation and a chapter on the illustrations of Ethiopic mss.*, London.
- Budge, E.A.W. 1906, *The Life of Takla Hāymānōt in the version of Dabra Libānōs, and the Miracles of Takla Hāymānōt in the version of Dabra Libānōs, and the Book of the riches of kings: The Ethiopic texts, from the British Museum MS. Oriental 723 edited with English translations, to which is*

- added an English translation of the Waldebbân version, 2 vols, London.
- Budge, E.A.W. 1928, *The Book of the saints of the Ethiopian church: a translation of the Ethiopic synaxarium; made from the manuscripts Oriental 660 and 661 in the British Museum*, 4 vols, Cambridge.
- Budge, E.A.W. 1930, *George of Lydda: the Patron Saint of England. A Study of the Cultus of St. George in Ethiopia. The Ethiopic Texts in Facsimile Edited for the First Time from the Manuscripts from Makdalâ now in the British Museum*, London.
- Budge, E.A.W. 1932, *The Queen of Sheba and her only son Menyelek (I) : being the 'Book of the glory of kings' (Kebra nagast) a work which is alike the traditional history of the establishment of the religion of the Hebrews in Ethiopia, and the patent of sovereignty which is now universally accepted in Abyssinia as the symbol of the divine authority to rule which the kings of the Solomonic line claimed to have received through their descent from the house of David. Translated from the Ethiopic*, London.
- Burton-Christie, D. 1993, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism*, London/New York.
- Buxton, D. 1947, 'The Christian Antiquities of Northern Ethiopia', *Archaeologia* 92, 1-42.
- Caner, D. 2002, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Later Antiquity*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London.
- Cerulli, E. 1943-1947, *Etiopi in Palestina: Storia della Comunità Etiopica di Gerusalemme*, 2 vols, Rome.
- Charaf, H., A. Chaaya 2002, 'Syriac Cult Places in Wadi Qadisha in Lebanon', in: A. Panaino, G. Pettinato (eds), *Ideologies as Intercultural Phenomena: Proceedings of the Third Annual Symposium of the Assyrian and Babylonian Intellectual Heritage Project Held in Chicago, USA, October 27-31, 2000* (Melammu Symposia MS 3), Milan, 45-52.
- Chojnacki, S. 1983, *Major Themes in Ethiopian Painting: Indigenous Developments, the Influence of Foreign Models, and their adaptation from the 13th to the 19th century*, Wiesbaden (Äthiopistische Forschungen Bd. 10).
- Chojnacki, S. 1990, 'Nimbi in Ethiopian painting: Their chronology and significance', *Paideuma* 36, 13-36.
- Chojnacki, S. 2004, 'Ethiopian Warrior Saints in 18th-Century Miniatures and their Significance in the Cultural History of Ethiopia', in: M.J. Ramos, I. Boavida (eds), *The Indigenous and the Foreign in Christian Ethiopian Art: On Portuguese-Ethiopian Contacts in the Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries*, Aldershot, UK.
- Chrétien, J.-P., J.-L. Triaud (eds) 1999, *Histoire d'Afrique: Les Enjeux de Mémoire*, Paris.
- Conti Rossini, C. 1894, 'Il Gadla Takla Haymanot secondo la redazione Waldebbana', *Memorie della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, ser. 5, Vol. II, 97-143.
- Conti Rossini, C. 1901, 'L'Evangelo d'Oro di Dabra Libanos', *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Rendiconti. Classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* 10, (ser. 5) 177-219.
- Conti Rossini, C. 1903, *Ricordi di un soggiorno in Eritrea*, Asmara.
- Conti Rossini, C. 1905, *Vitae Sanctorum Indigenarum*, Fasc. 1, *Acta S. Basalota Mika'el et S. Anorewos*, (CSCO 28-29, Script. Aeth. 11-12 (Series 2, T. 20)), Louvain.
- Conti Rossini, C. (ed.) 1909-1910, *Documenta Ad Illustrandam Historiam, I: Liber Axumae*, (CSCO 54, Script. Aeth. 24, (Series 2, T. 8)), Paris.
- Conti Rossini, C. 1938, 'Note di agiografia etiopica ('Abiya-Egzi'. 'Arkalêdes e Gabra-Iyasus)', *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 17, 409-462.
- Cowley, R.W. 1974, 'The Biblical Canon of The Ethiopian Orthodox Church Today', *Ostkirchliche Studien* 23, 318-323.
- Crummey, D. 2000, *Land and Society in the Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century*, Urbana/Chicago/Addis Ababa.
- Crummey, D. 2006, 'Church and Nation: the Ethiopian Tāwahedo Church from the Thirteenth to the Twentieth Century', in: M. Angold (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Volume V, Eastern Christianity*, Cambridge, 468-469.
- Cruikshank Dodd, E. 1992, 'The Monastery of Mar Musa al-Habashi, near Nebek, Syria', *Arte medievale*, series 2, 6 (1), 61-135.
- Cruikshank Dodd, E. 2000, *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi: A Study in Medieval Painting in Syria*, Toronto.
- Derat, M.-L. 1999, 'Les "vies" du saint Éthiopien Tāklā Haymanot (XIII^e-XIV^e siècles)', in J.-P. Chrétien, J.-L. Triaud (eds), *Histoire d'Afrique: Les Enjeux de Mémoire*, Paris, 33-47.
- Derat, M.-L. 2003, *Le Domaine des Rois Éthiopiens (1270-1527): Espace, Pouvoir et Monachisme*, Paris.
- Derat, M.-L. 2006, 'The Acts of King Lalibāla: Structure, Literary Models and Dating Elements', in: S. Uhlig (ed.), *Proceedings of the XVth international Conference of Ethiopian Studies (Hamburg July 20-25, 2003)*, Wiesbaden, 561-568.
- Donham, D.L. 1986, 'Old Abyssinia and the New Ethiopian Empire: Themes in Social History', in: D.L. Donham, W. James (eds), *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*, Cambridge.
- Doresse, J. 1970a, 'Nouvelles recherches sur les relations entre l'Égypte copte et l'Éthiopie: XII^e-XIII^e siècles', *CRAI* 114.3, 557-566.
- Doresse, J. 1970b, 'Les anciens monastères coptes de la Moyenne Égypte et leurs influences sur l'Éthiopie chrétienne médiévale', *Documents pour servir à l'histoire des civilisations éthiopiennes*, Fasc. 1, 81-85.
- Erlich, H. 2002, *The Cross and the River: Ethiopia, Egypt, and the Nile*, Boulder/Colorado.
- Esbroeck, M. van 1975, 'Les Apophtegmes dans les Versions Orientales', *AnBol* 93, 381-389.
- Evetts, B.T.A. (ed.) 1895, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries, Attributed to Abu Salih, the Armenian*, facsimile ed. 2002, Piscataway, New Jersey.
- Fattovich, R. 1977, 'Some data for the study of cultural history in ancient Northern Ethiopia', *Nyame Akuma, Newsletter of the Society of Africanist Archaeologists in America*, May 1977, 6-18.

- Fiey, J.-M. 2004 (ed. L.I. Conrad), *Saints Syriaques*, Princeton, N.J. (Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 6).
- Finneran, N. 2007, *The Archaeology of Ethiopia*, London.
- Folda, J. 1995, *The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, 1098–1187*, Cambridge.
- Folda, J. 1997, 'Crusader Art', in: W.D. Wixom, H.C. Evans (eds), *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era AD 843–1261*, New York, 388–391.
- Folda, J., P. French 1982, 'Crusader frescoes at Crac des Chevaliers and Marqab Castle', *DOP* 36, 177–212.
- Gerstel, S.E.J. 2001, 'Art and Identity in the Medieval Morea', in: A.E. Laiou, R.P. Mottahedeh (eds), *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, Washington D.C., 263–285.
- Gerster, G. 1970, *Churches in Rock*, London [also French and German editions, 1968–1970].
- Gervers, M. 2003a, 'The Debra Sina-Golgotha-Sellassie Complex in Lalibala', in: Birhanu Teffera, R. Pankhurst (eds), *Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on the History of Ethiopian Art*, Addis Ababa, 388–414.
- Gervers, M. 2003b, 'The Rehabilitation of the Zague Kings and the Building of the Debra Sina-Golgotha-Sellassie Complex in Lalibela', *Africana Bulletin* 51, 23–49.
- Getatchew Haile 1981, 'Religious Controversies and the Growth of Ethiopic Literature in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', *OC* 65, 102–136.
- Getatchew Haile 1990, 'The Homily of Abba Eleyas, Bishop of Aksum, on Mättä', *AnBol* 108, 29–47.
- Getatchew Haile (ed.) 1992, *The Mariology of Emperor Zär'a Ya'eqob of Ethiopia: texts and translations*, Rome (OCA 242).
- Getatchew Haile 2007, 'Mäzmurä Krastos', in: S. Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopedia Aethiopica*, Wiesbaden, Vol. 3, 897.
- Gill, J. 1961, *The Council of Florence*, Cambridge.
- Guidi, I. 1901, *Vocabolario Amarico-Italiano*, Rome.
- Hefferman, T.J. 1988, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages*, New York.
- Heldman, M.E. 1989, 'An Ewostathian Style and the Gunda Gunde Style in Fifteenth-Century Ethiopian Manuscript Illumination', in: *Proceedings of the First International Conference on the History of Ethiopian Art*, London, 5–14.
- Heldman, M.E. 1994, *The Marian Icons of the Painter Frē Seyon: A Study in Fifteenth-Century Ethiopian Art, Patronage and Spirituality*, Wiesbaden.
- Henze, P. 2000, *Layers of Time, A History of Ethiopia*, New York.
- Henze, P. 2004, 'A Visit to Gunda Gunde – February 1998', in: W. Raunig, Asfa-Wossen Assef (eds), *Äthiopien zwischen Orient und Okzident*, Frankfurt/Mein, 26–27. An essay based on this paper was subsequently published online at http://www.irrob.org/visit_to_irobland.html.
- Henze, P. 2008, *Visits To Monasteries In Shire, Tigray, Ethiopia*, http://www.irrob.org/monasteries_in_shire.html (accessed 18 Feb. 2009).
- Hirsch, B., F.-X. Fauvelle-Aymar 2001, 'Aksum après Aksum: Royauté, archéologie et herméutique chrétienne de Ménélík II (r. 1865–1913) à Zär'a Ya'eqob (r. 1434–1468)', *Annales d'Éthiopie* 17, 57–109.
- Hubbard, D.A. 1954, *The Literary Sources of the Kebra Nagast*, Saint Andrews.
- Immerzeel, M. 2004, 'Holy Horsemen and Crusader Banners. Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria', *ECA* 1, 29–60.
- Immerzeel, M. 2007, 'Some Remarks about the Name of the Monastery and an Enigmatic Scene', *ECA* 4, 127–131.
- Jacob, P. 1996, 'Étude Analytique de l'Inscription Éthiopienne dans l'Ermitage de Mar Assia (Mont Liban, vallée de la Qadisha)', *Spéléorient* 1, 35–38.
- Jeffreys, E. et al. 1986, *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, Melbourne (sourced from <http://www.ucc.ie/milmart/mercsrcs.html>, through the *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/newadds.html>, accessed on 24-2-2009).
- Juel-Jensen, B., G. Rowell (eds) 1975, *Rock-Hewn Churches of Eastern Tigray: an Account of the Oxford University Expedition to Ethiopia (1974)*, Oxford.
- Kaplan, S. 1984, *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of Early Solomonic Ethiopia*, Wiesbaden.
- Kaplan, S. 2002, 'Seeing is Believing: The Power of Visual Culture in the Religious World of Aše Zär'a Ya'eqob of Ethiopia (1434–1468)', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 32 (4), 401–421.
- Lepage, C. 1975, 'Peintures Murales de Ganata Maryam (rapport préliminaire)', *Abbay* 6, 59–84.
- Lepage, C., J. Mercier 2002, 'Une Église Lalibélienne: Zoz Amba', *Annales d'Éthiopie* 18, 149–154.
- Lepage, C., J. Mercier 2005, *Les Églises Historiques du Tigray/ The Ancient Churches of Tigray*, Paris.
- Levine, D.N. 1965, *Wax and Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture*, Chicago.
- Levine, D.N. 2000, *Greater Ethiopia, the Evolution of a Multi-ethnic Society*, 2nd ed., Chicago.
- Lusini, G. 1993, *Studi sul Monachesimo Eustaziano (secoli XIV–XV)*, (Studi Africanistici, Serie Etiopica 3), Naples.
- Lusini, G. 2003, 'Abraham of Däbrä Şayon', in: S. Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Wiesbaden, Vol. 1, 48.
- Maguire, H. 1996, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium*, Princeton, New Jersey.
- Mercier, J. 2000, *L'Arche éthiopienne: Art chrétien d'Éthiopie*, Paris.
- Mercier, J. 2001, 'Ethiopian Art History', in: *Ethiopian Art: The Walters Art Museum*, Baltimore, 45–73.
- Mercier, J. 2002, 'Peintures du XIIIe siècle dans une église de l'Angot (Éthiopie)', *Annales d'Éthiopie* 18, 143–147.
- Mercier, J. 2004, *Vierges d'Éthiopie*, Paris.
- Minnich, N.H. 2005, 'The Catholic Church and the Pastoral Care of Black Africans in Renaissance Italy', in: T.F. Earle, K.J.P. Lowe (eds), *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, Cambridge, 280–300.
- Minnich, N.H. 2008, 'Councils of the Catholic Reformation: a Historical Survey', in: G. Christianson, T.M. Izbicki, C.M. Bellitto (eds), *The Church, the Councils, & Reform: the Legacy of the Fifteenth Century*, Washington D.C., 27–60.
- Mordini, A. 1954, 'Il Convento di Gunda Gunde', *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* XII, 29–48.
- Munro-Hay, S.C. 1991, *Aksum: An African Civilization of Late Antiquity*, Edinburgh.

- Munro-Hay, S.C. 1997, *Ethiopia and Alexandria, The Metropolitan Episcopacy of Ethiopia*, 2 vols, Warsaw (Bibliotheca Nubica et Aethiopica 5 and 9).
- Munro-Hay, S.C. 2005, 'Saintly Shadows', in: W. Raunig, S. Wenig (eds), *Afrikas Horn: Akten der Erster Internationalen Littmann Konferenz in München*, Wiesbaden, 137-168.
- Munro-Hay, S.C. 2006, *The Quest for the Ark of the Covenant*, London/New York.
- Perruchon, J.F.C. 1893, *Les chroniques de Zar'a Yä'eqôb et de Ba'eda Märyâm: rois d'Éthiopie de 1434 à 1478* (Ethiopic text and French translation. Introduction by Jules Perruchon), Paris.
- Persoon, J. 2003, 'Ethiopian Monasticism and the Visit of the Holy Family to Ethiopia', *Kirche und Schule in Äthiopien* 56, 21-28.
- Phillipson, D.W. 2009, *Ancient Churches of Ethiopia: Fourth-Fourteenth Centuries*, New Haven/London.
- Piovanelli, P. 1995, 'Les controverses théologiques sous le roi Zar'a Yä'qob (1434-1468) et la mise en place du monophysisme éthiopien', in: A. Le Boulluec (ed.), *La controverse religieuse et ses formes*, Paris, 189-228.
- Plant, R. 1985, *Architecture of the Tigre*, London.
- Reid, R. 2006, 'War and Remembrance: Orality, Literacy and Conflict in the Horn', *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 18, 89-103.
- Rundgren, F. 1984, 'Old Ethiopic *mälkē*', in S. Rubenson (ed.), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Lund, 26-29 April 1982*, Uppsala/Addis Ababa/East Lansing, 59-60.
- Schabel, C.D. 2005, 'Religion', in: A. Nikolaou-Konnarē, C.D. Schabel (eds), *Cyprus, Society and Culture 1191-1374*, Leiden, 157-218 (The Medieval Mediterranean 58).
- Schneider, R. 1963, 'Une page du Gadla Šādqān', *Annales d'Éthiopie* 5 (1), 167-169.
- Sergew Hable-Selassie 1972, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History to 1270*, Addis Ababa.
- Sergew Hable-Selassie 1975, 'The Sadqan', in: M. Belaynesh, S. Chojnacki, R. Pankhurst (eds), *The Dictionary of Ethiopian Biography*, Vol. 1: *From Early Times to the End of the Zagwé Dynasty c. 1270 A.D.*, Addis Ababa. Available at http://www.dacb.org/stories/ethiopia/the_sadqan.html.
- Snelders, B. (forthcoming), *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction, Medieval Art from the Syrian Orthodox in the Mosul Area*, Leuven.
- Snelders, B., A. Jeudy 2006, 'Guarding the Entrances: Equestrian Saints in Egypt and North Mesopotamia', *ECA* 3, 105-142.
- Tadesse Tamrat 1968, 'Notes on the Fifteenth Century Stephanite "Heresy" in the Ethiopian Church', *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 22, 102-115.
- Tadesse Tamrat 1972, *Church and State in Ethiopia, 1270-1527*, Oxford.
- Tedeschi, S. 1969, 'L'Etiopia nella storia dei patriarchi alessandrini', *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 23, 232-271.
- Tedeschi, S. 1989, 'Etiopi e copti al concilio di Firenze', *Annuarium Historiae Conciliorum* 21, 380-397.
- Tesfaye Gabre Maryam 1997, 'A Structural Analysis of Gädlä Täklä Haymanot', *African Languages and Cultures* 10 (2), 181-198.
- Tribe, T. 1997, 'The Word in the Desert: The Wall-Paintings of Debra Maryam Korkor (Ge'eralta, Tigray)', in: K. Fukui, E. Kurimoto, M. Shigeta (eds), *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective (Papers of the 13th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies)*, Kyoto, Vol. 3, 35-61.
- Trimingham, J.S. 1952, *Islam in Ethiopia*, Oxford.
- Turaiev, B.A. (ed.) 1902, *Vita Samuelis Valdebani* [Gädlä Abunä Samu'el, abbot of Wäldäbba], Saint Petersburg.
- Turaiev, B.A. (ed.) 1906, *Vitae sanctorum indigenarum, I. Acta S. Eustathii* (CSCO 32, Script. Aeth. 15), Rome.
- Ullendorff, E. 1968, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, The Schweich Lectures on Biblical Archaeology 1967, London.
- Walter, C. 2003, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, Aldershot.
- Weitzmann, K. 1966, 'Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom', *DOP* 20, 71-72. (Reprinted in Weitzmann, K. 1982, *Studies in the Arts at Sinai*, Princeton, New Jersey, 345-346.)
- Wright, W. 1877, *Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, London.

Zu Decke und Dach der Theotokoskirche des Katherinenklosters im Sinai

Peter GROSSMANN

Seit der von George H. Forsyth und Kurt Weitzmann geleiteten Alexandria-Michigan-Princeton Archaeological Expedition to the Monastery of St. Catherine in den Jahren 1958 bis 1965 gilt das Dach¹ der nach Prokopios von Caesarea (*de aed.* V 9) der Theotokos (Gottesmutter) geweihten *katholiki ekklesia* (καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία) im Katherinenkloster – gewissermaßen wissenschaftlich abgesegnet – als zum originalen Bestand des 6. Jahrhunderts gehörig (Pl. 1)². Scheinbar zusätzlich untermauert wurde diese Auffassung durch die Ergebnisse einer dendrochronologischen Untersuchung der beiden israelischen Gelehrten Nili Liphshitz und Yoar Waisel von der Universität Tel Aviv, die für die an drei verschiedenen Stellen überprüften *roof logs* des Kirchendachs eine Datierung in das 6. Jahrhundert bestätigten³. Übernommen wurde dieses Ergebnis u.a. von Christos Katsibinis, der sich als Architekt in den Jahren 1983 und 1987 eingehend mit der Dachkonstruktion der Kirche beschäftigt hat⁴, sowie von Cyril Mango⁵.

Untersucht man das Dach über der Kirche des Katherinenklosters genauer, so sind Zweifel an dieser bisher einhellig akzeptierten Auffassung kaum zu unterdrücken. Bereits der konstruktive Aufbau des heutigen Dachs läßt es fraglich erscheinen, daß das heutige Dach – abgesehen von der unmittelbar als neuzeitlich erkennbaren Wellblech-Dachhaut – der ursprünglichen Ausführung entspricht. Auffällig und störend ist vor allem die Diskrepanz zwischen der Neigung der heutigen Dachschrägen und der Giebelwände am östlichen und westlichen Ende des Mittelschiffs (Pl. 2). Beides sollte bei einem antiken Bauwerk weitgehend übereingestimmt haben. Darüber hinaus gibt es in der frühchristlichen Architektur der östlichen Reichshälfte (anders als im Westen) kaum Beispiele, in denen die eigentliche Dachhaut und die Draufseite der Giebelwände nicht ungefähr in derselben Ebene gelegen hätten.

Das heutige Dach der Theotokoskirche unterscheidet sich jedoch in seiner Neigung und Höhe

beträchtlich von den Giebelwänden⁶. Freilich erlauben die heutigen Dachbinder keine andere Wahl, da die Verzapfungsstellen der Sparren mit den Balken viel zu weit nach innen gezogen sind (Fig. 1, Pl. 3). An einigen meßbaren Stellen betrug der rückwärtige Überstand bis zu 0,10 m. Darüber hinaus sind an den wie ‚abstehende Ohren‘ an den Seiten der Giebelwände und in Höhe des Dachansatzes auskragenden und auf der Vorder- und Rückseite mit einem einfachen Karniesprofil (*cyma recta*) geschmückten Kragsteine⁷ (Pl. 4a-b. 5), ein sonst in der spätantiken Architektur nicht belegtes

¹ Freilich ohne die moderne Wellblechdachhaut.

² Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965; sowie Forsyth 1968, 8f.

³ Liphshitz/Waisel 1976, 42 N° 10.

⁴ Katsibinis 1983, 268; sowie ders. 1991, 75ff. bes. 78, Fig. 27.

⁵ Mango 1976, 22, Fig. 21.

⁶ Die heutige Dachhaut besteht aus modernen, auf eine Holzschalung genagelten Wellblechplatten, die auch über die Giebelwände gefaltet sind.

⁷ Das einzige vollständige Exemplar dieser Kragsteine findet sich an der Nordostecke des Mittelschiffs dachs, Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 41 C und 42 B; das Gegenstück der anderen Seiten (Südostecke des Mittelschiffs dachs), ebenda Pl. 41 D und 42 C, ist ein offensichtlich verworfener Block, der nach seinem auf der Vorderseite erhaltenen geknickten Geisonprofil nach dem Vorbild der westlichen Giebelwand, ebenda Pl. 25, eigentlich umgedreht als seitlich auskragender Kraggeisonblock hätte versetzt werden sollen, doch hat man hier auf das durchgezogene horizontale Geisonprofil verzichtet, weil dies mit dem Biforium über dem Stirnbogen der Apsis in Konflikt geraten wäre. Sonst ist dieses horizontal durchgezogene Geisonprofil mit seinen nach unten abgeknickten und dann unmotiviert unterbrochenen Enden durchaus merkwürdig. Es müßte hier gemäß syrischer Vorbilder entweder eine Volute folgen wie z.B. in der Kirche von Behyō, Butler 1969, 141, Fig. 148, bzw. der Ostkirche von Baqirhā, ebenda Fig. 190, oder eine nach unten folgende Fortsetzung bis zu einem entsprechenden Profil an den Halbgiebeln der Seitenschiffe. In der Regel ist jedoch dieses horizontal durchgezogene Geisonprofil an den Ecken herumgekröpft, um an den Seiten als Traufgesims zu fungieren.

Dekorelement, das wir im folgenden als ‚Kraggeison‘ bezeichnen werden (von Forsyth ‚brackets‘, von Katsibinis ‚mensole‘ genannt), einige Anschlußelemente von Konstruktionsgliedern zu erkennen, die in dem heutigen Dachaufbau keine Berücksichtigung finden. Schließlich machen auch die Hölzer der heutigen Dachkonstruktion, wenn man sie mit den Deckenbalken einschließlich der durch ihre Beschriftung gesichert justinianischen Verkleidung vergleicht, einen durchaus neuzeitlichen Eindruck. Sie wurden in einem verhältnismäßig frischen Zustand verbaut und zeigen daher überall Risse und Verdrehungen, die bei genügend ausgetrockneten Hölzern, wie sie in der Antike bevorzugt verwendet wurden⁸, nicht in dem Maße auftreten. Hier dürfte also einiges nicht mehr dem ursprünglichen Zustand angehören.

Scheinbar im Widerspruch zu diesen Beobachtungen stehen die Ergebnisse der dendrochronologischen Untersuchungen von N. Liphshitz und Y. Waisel. Nimmt man jedoch den Bericht der beiden Gelehrten sorgfältig unter die Lupe, so zeigt sich allerdings, daß sie nur die als *roof logs* bezeichneten Hölzer des Mittelschiffdachs untersucht haben. Kann es sich dabei wirklich um die Bestandteile der gesamten heutigen Dachkonstruktion gehandelt haben? Nach den einschlägigen Lexika

sind *logs* unbearbeitete Baumstämme. Eine derartige Bezeichnung paßt nur zu den eigentlichen Deckenbalken, bei denen es sich tatsächlich um verhältnismäßig rohe, teilweise noch die Rundungen ihrer Baumkante zeigende Hölzer handelt⁹, während die Hängesäulen, Sparren und Büge (auch Spreizen genannt) des heutigen Dachs allseitig begradigt und stellenweise auch mit einem bescheidenen Dekor versehen sind, also kaum die Bezeichnung als *roof logs* verdienen. Sie dürften daher von N. Liphshitz und Y. Waisel nicht gemeint gewesen sein. Die Bezeichnung als *roof logs* gilt folglich nur für jene Deckenbalken, die damit uneingeschränkt zum justinianischen Bestand der Kirche gezählt werden dürfen.

Die über diesen Deckenbalken folgenden Elemente der Dachkonstruktion sind hingegen nicht mehr original. Das ursprüngliche Dach sollte wesentlich anders ausgesehen haben. Doch zunächst zur Deckenkonstruktion.

Das Mittelschiff der Kirche wird von dreizehn ziemlich roh gelassenen und an der Oberfläche auch zum Splittern neigenden, in Abständen von 1,35 bis 1,60 m verlegten Holzbalken der Spezies *Cupressus sempervirens*¹⁰ überspannt, die von unten und an beiden Seiten mit aufgenagelten Brettern aus härteren und mit einem geschnitzten Dekor versehenen Hölzern verkleidet sind. Am westlichen Anfang und östlichen Ende des Naos, in unmittelbarem Anschluß an die Giebelwände fehlen entsprechende Balken¹¹. Hier dürfte die Dachlast von den Giebelwänden selbst aufgenommen worden sein. Der Dekor der Verkleidung zeigt auf der Unterseite aller Balken knallig in Rot und Gold bemalte¹², schmale, mit verschiedenartigen Girlanden oder allerlei Fabelwesen, Vögeln sowie Land- und Seetieren in symmetrischer Anordnung zu beiden Seiten eines mittleren Kreuzes im Kranz geschmückte Streifen¹³, die an den Seiten und beiden Enden von aufgenagelten, also unabhängigen, mit floralen Mustern verzierten und an den Ecken auf Gehrung geschnittenen Randleisten gerahmt sind¹⁴. Die seitliche Verkleidung der Balken blieb weitgehend undekoriert. Sie besaß nur am oberen Rand einen auf eigenen Leisten angebrachten, und mit wechselnden Motiven geschmückten Blätter- bzw. Girlandenfries geringer Höhe (Pl. 1, 3)¹⁵. Sonst tragen lediglich die beiden mittleren Balken (7 und 8, von Westen gezählt) eine von der Westseite (Eingangsseite) her lesbare Bauinschrift, die die Fertigstellung der Kirche in den späteren Regierungsjahren des

⁸ Vitruv, *de arch.* II 9, 3-4.

⁹ s. Katsibinis, 1983, 268, Fig. S. 271 mitte; sowie ders. 1991, Fig. 28.

¹⁰ Liphshitz/Waisel 1976, 42, N° 10.

¹¹ Eine entsprechende Bauweise scheint auch sonst in der frühchristlichen Architektur des Ostens üblich gewesen zu sein. Sie fehlen auch bei allen von H.C. Butler aufgenommenen, hinreichend hoch erhaltenen Kirchen in Syrien, s. Butler 1969, passim. Fig. 25, 31, 49, 57, 61, 73, 115, 142, 145, 153, 158, 184, 197; Katsibinis 1991, Fig. 2, ergänzt an den betreffenden Stellen Binder ohne Balken, indem er eine Erhöhung der Mauerkrone am Fuß der Sparren annimmt.

¹² Nach den Beobachtungen von L.J. Drewer entstammt diese Bemalung erst der Neuzeit (Drewer 1971, 11).

¹³ Ausführliche Beschreibung bei Drewer 1971, 2f, Fig. 6; die übrigen Fig. sind freilich nahezu unbrauchbar; für letztere s. Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 56ff.

¹⁴ Auf Grund der zu geringen Länge der unteren Balkenverkleidung nimmt Drewer, wood beams 36 Anm. 35 an, daß die betreffenden Schnitzarbeiten nicht am Ort ausgeführt wurden, sondern in einer entfernt gelegenen Werkstatt, wo keine genauen Maße zur Verfügung standen.

¹⁵ Drewer 1971, 2; eigene Fig. fehlen auch bei Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, doch sind einige Motive zusammen mit den Inschriften fotografiert worden, ebenda Pl. 80-81, A. E. G. H. und I; sowie Pl. 83 B.

Kaisers Justinian, nach dem Tode der Kaiserin Theodora (Juni 548) angibt¹⁶. Ferner wird in der auf dem letzten, ganz im Osten befindlichen Balken angebrachten Inschrift, die hier jetzt von der Ostseite, also nur aus dem Sanktuarium zu lesen ist, der Baumeister der Kirche, Architekt und Diakon Stephanos von Aila genannt, vermutlich ein Mann nabatäischer, also arabischer Herkunft¹⁷.

Auffällig sind darüber hinaus die zunächst als unmotiviert erscheinenden größeren Abstände innerhalb einzelner Wörter der beiden zuerst genannten Inschriften. Sogar der Name des Kaisers Justinianos ist zwischen der Buchstaben I und N unterbrochen¹⁸. Diese Unterbrechungen sind sehr regelmäßig verteilt und selbst 0,16 bis 0,17 m weit. Chr. Katsibinis ergänzt hier nach ihren rund erscheinenden Abdrücken¹⁹ einleuchtend einige aufzunagelnde, hölzerne und mit mittleren Kreuzen geschmückte Tondi, die er in einem der Depots des Klosters entdeckt hat (Fig. 1)²⁰.

Darüber hinaus endet bei allen Balken die bereits genannte, am oberen Rand mit floralen Mustern versehene Seitenverkleidung in einer überall ziemlich genau übereinstimmenden Höhe, so daß man mühelos in beliebiger Richtung ein Brett darüber hin- und herschieben kann²¹. Aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach hat sich daher über jenen oberen Randleisten ein Verschuß befunden, der einst einfach auf die obere Seitenverkleidung aufgenagelt war. Einige der dazugehörigen Nägel sitzen noch im Holz und wurden von G. Forsyth fotografiert (Pl. 3)²². Der Dachraum war mithin von unten, aus dem Mittelschiff nicht einsichtig, wie irrtümlich vielfach angenommen wird²³.

Eine derartige das Kircheninnere gegen den Dachraum verschließende Decke ist jedoch schon wegen der im Dachraum herrschenden Temperaturschwankungen erforderlich, die sich nicht auf den Kirchenraum übertragen sollten. Ferner würde ein zum Kirchenschiff offener Dachraum wegen seiner in der Regel offenen Fenster²⁴, vor allem in einem Gebiet, in dem mit häufigen Sandstürmen zu rechnen ist, erheblich zur Verschmutzung des Kircheninnern beitragen. Auch allerlei Vögel würden in den Kirchenraum eindringen können und Verschmutzungen an schwer zu reinigenden Stellen anrichten. Die originale Decke ist allerdings verloren gegangen. Was sich heute etwa an der gleichen Stelle befindet, sind einfache aus dünnen Brettern zusammengesetzte und mit Sternenmustern bemalte Holzplatten, die auch auf eine andere Weise befestigt

sind und jedenfalls nicht betreten werden können. Sie ruhen auf seitlich an die Verkleidung der

¹⁶ Ševčenko 1966, 256 und 262, Inscr. 4-5, Fig. 4-5; sowie Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 66/67, 80/81.

¹⁷ Eine weitere griechische Inschrift wurde von Katsibinis 1991, 25ff, Fig. 3 und Pl. IV, an der Innenseite der östlichen Giebelwand entdeckt, blieb aber bisher unpubliziert.

¹⁸ IOYCTI NIANOY, s. Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 80/81 F.

¹⁹ Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 80/81 D und F.

²⁰ Katsibinis 1991, 19ff. Fig. II und III. Unsere eigene ursprüngliche Vermutung, daß es sich bei diesen Unterbrechungen um Anschlußstellen von Querhölzern handelt, mit deren Hilfe eine Art Kassettenmuster hergestellt werden sollte, hat sich damit erübrigt.

²¹ Eine derartige verschiebbare Laufbohle wird auch noch heute benutzt, wenn man sich über den Balken im Dachraum bewegen möchte, s. Forsyth 1979, 49-80, bes. 57, Fig. 34.

²² Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 83 B.

²³ So auch Forsyth 1979, 57; allgemein zu dieser Frage vor allem W. Sackur, der in seinem Buch (1925, 160ff) wieder und wieder betont, daß in der frühchristlichen und mittelalterlichen Architektur die Dachstühle von unten vielfach einsehbar gewesen wären; darnach Deichmann 1957, bes. 201ff. mit Belegen; ferner auch Katsibinis 1991, 81; auch ist der von Sackur 1925, 164 und Deichmann 1957, 257, vertretenen Auffassung zu widersprechen, daß auf Grund einer Notiz bei Optatus von Mileve, *de schismate Donatistarum* I, 18 (engl. Übers. in Edwards 1997, 45), über die Erstürmung einer katholischen Kirche durch die Donatisten, bei welcher Gelegenheit letztere das Dach abgedeckt und die Dachziegel (*tegules*) auf die sich schützend um den Altar versammelnden Diakone geworfen hätten, zu schließen sei, daß die Kirche einen zum Kirchenschiff offenen Dachstuhl gehabt haben müsse, da ein derartiger Vorgang angeblich nur bei einem offenen Dachstuhl möglich gewesen wäre. Macht man sich jedoch klar, wie die Dachziegel auf die um den Altar versammelten Diakone hätten geworfen werden können, so konnte das nur vom Boden des Dachraumes aus geschehen sein, dem einzigen Bereich, in dem man sich frei bewegen konnte, denn auf dem schrägen eigentlichen Dach wäre ein Aufenthalt höchst gefährlich gewesen. Ferner dürften die Dachschrägen auch unzugänglich gewesen sein, und kommen schon deswegen nicht in Frage. Auf jeden Fall wären sie nur aus dem Dachraum zu betreten gewesen. Man wird daher mit größerer Wahrscheinlichkeit im Boden des Dachraumes durch Herausnahme einiger Bodenbretter ein größeres Loch geschaffen haben und die Dachziegel selbst von unten zwischen den Sparren und Pfetten hochgestoßen und dann herausgelöst haben. Ein ähnlicher Vorgang ereignete sich nach der Darstellung im *libellus precum* der Presbyter Faustinus und Marcellinus (Text abgedruckt bei Lange 1885, 315, Anm. 1) wenige Jahre später, in 366 auch bei einer der Basiliken (angeblich der *Basilica Liberiana*, der heutigen S. Maria Maggiore) in Rom anlässlich der tumultarischen Auseinandersetzungen bei der Bischofswahl des Damasus.

²⁴ Deichmann 1957, 261f, weist eigens auf die zumeist besondere Größe der Dachraumfenster hin.

Deckenbalken genagelten Leisten, durch die die genannten Inschriften am 7. und 8. Balken sowie am östlichen Ende von unten unsichtbar werden²⁵. Nur wer es wagt, sich in den Dachraum zu begeben, kann den oberen Teil der Inschriften zu sehen bekommen.

Problematisch sind darüber hinaus die inneren Hohlkehlen unter den Wandanschlüssen der Deckenbalken. Sie entsprechen in ihrer Gestalt nicht der Form, wie sie in frühchristlicher Zeit zu erwarten wären. Man ist geneigt, auf sie ganz zu verzichten, zumal sie auch in anderen Architekturlandschaften wie z.B. in Syrien nicht vertreten sind. Auffällig ist allerdings, daß der geschnitzte Dekor an der Unterseite der Deckenbalken bereits bei einem gewissen Abstand vor der Wand zum Abschluß kommt²⁶, was nahe legt, daß weitere Konstruktions- oder Dekorelemente hier zu ergänzen wären. Grundsätzlich in Frage kämen den Balken unterlegte Konsolen, bzw. hölzerne Verlängerungsstutzen, was jedoch beides im vorliegenden Fall auszuschließen ist, oder aber auch ein entlang der Wand geführtes Karniesprofil, bei dem es sich hier allerdings nur um eine aus Holz gefertigte Surrogatkonstruktion gehandelt haben kann. Möglicherweise ist die genannte Hohlkehle als ein späterer Ersatz einer solchen anzusehen.

In die Draufseite der Deckenbalken sind die schräg geführten Einlassungen für die Einführung der Sparren enthalten (Pl. 3), die zusammen mit den horizontalen Balken und den aussteifenden kurzen mittleren Hängesäulen zu dreieckigen sogenannten

Bindern zusammengefügt wurden (Fig. 1). Diese Binder bilden das eigentliche Traggerüst der Dachkonstruktion. Die rückwärtigen Schnittkanten dieser Einlassungen liegen, worauf bereits oben hingewiesen wurde, nicht über den Auflagerwänden der Deckenbalken sondern stehen zum Dachraum hin ungleichmäßig um bis zu 0,10 m über, so daß auch die Sparrenanschlüsse nicht über den Auflagerwänden sondern über deren innerseitigen Kante zu liegen kommen, womit sie die Balken zusätzlich ungünstig belasten²⁷. Am oberen Ende sind die heutigen Sparren mit kurzen vertikalen Hängesäulen verbunden, die am Fuß durch schräge, in die Sparren eingreifende Büge in der Vertikalen gehalten werden. Der Anschluß an die unteren Balken blieb offen, doch ist jede zweite Hängesäule durch einseitig angeordnete schmale Eisenbänder mit den Balken verbunden²⁸.

Der beschriebene Aufbau entspricht grundsätzlich der antiken Bauweise, wie einigen antiken Darstellungen aus Syrien zu entnehmen ist, doch sind bei diesen Beispielen die Hängesäulen in der Regel fest mit den horizontalen Balken verbunden²⁹. Wie diese Verbindungen in der originalen Ausführung der Theotokoskirche im Sinai hergestellt waren, ist unsicher, denn in den Balken sind keine entsprechenden Verzapfungslöcher enthalten. Es gibt auch keine Spuren für eine seitliche Befestigung von Holzlaschen. Möglicherweise hatte man sich durch auf beiden Seiten aufgenagelte dreieckige Knaggen beholfen, wie sie auch in neuzeitlichen Handbüchern gelegentlich empfohlen werden³⁰.

Um ein seitliches Umkippen der Binder zu verhindern und eine unveränderbare vertikale Aufstellung zu gewährleisten, hat man üblicherweise alle Binder durch mehrere aufgenagelte Pfetten miteinander verbunden, deren Enden vielfach in das Mauerwerk der Giebelwände eingelassen wurden³¹, und gleichzeitig auch zur Befestigung der Dachhaut dienten³². In der Kirche des Katherinenklosters ist wegen der modernen Wellblechüberdeckung derzeit leider nicht überprüfbar, ob auch in dieser Kirche entsprechende Einarbeitungen zur Lagerung der Pfettenenden in den Giebelwänden enthalten sind.

Die gegenwärtig allein sichtbaren Schnittkanten für die Einlassungen der Sparren in den Draufseiten der Deckenbalken sehen mit ihren scharfen, aber zugleich auffällig unregelmäßigen Kanten derart frisch aus, daß man durchaus den Eindruck gewinnt, daß diese erst in neuerer Zeit eingestemmt wurden³³. Vermutlich war damit die Absicht verbunden, die

²⁵ Zur Verteilung dieser Latten s. Katsibinis 1991, Pl. II.

²⁶ s.o. Anm. 13.

²⁷ Die Darstellung bei Katsibinis 1991, Fig. 27, ist irreführend, denn sie stimmt mit den tatsächlichen Verhältnissen nicht überein; vgl. dagegen die Photographien bei Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 83 A. B; eigene Messungen ergaben darüber hinaus, daß die untere Seite der Sparren an der Schnittstelle mit der Balkendraufseite bis zu 0,10 m hinter die innere Mauerflucht zurücktrat.

²⁸ Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 82 A.

²⁹ Beispiele bei Butler 1920, 348, 376, 377; sowie ders. 1969, 199ff, Fig. 201 und 204.

³⁰ Schmitt 1956, 365f, Fig. 2025.

³¹ s. auch Deichmann 1957, 262, Belege bei Butler 1969, passim.

³² In dieser Hinsicht unterscheiden sich die in der Antike im Osten gebräuchlichen Dachkonstruktionen von der modernen Bauweise, nach der die Pfetten als Träger der Sparren unterhalb der letzteren angeordnet sind und selbst auf einer festen Unterstützung (Mauerzüge oder Pfosten) ruhen.

³³ Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 83 B.

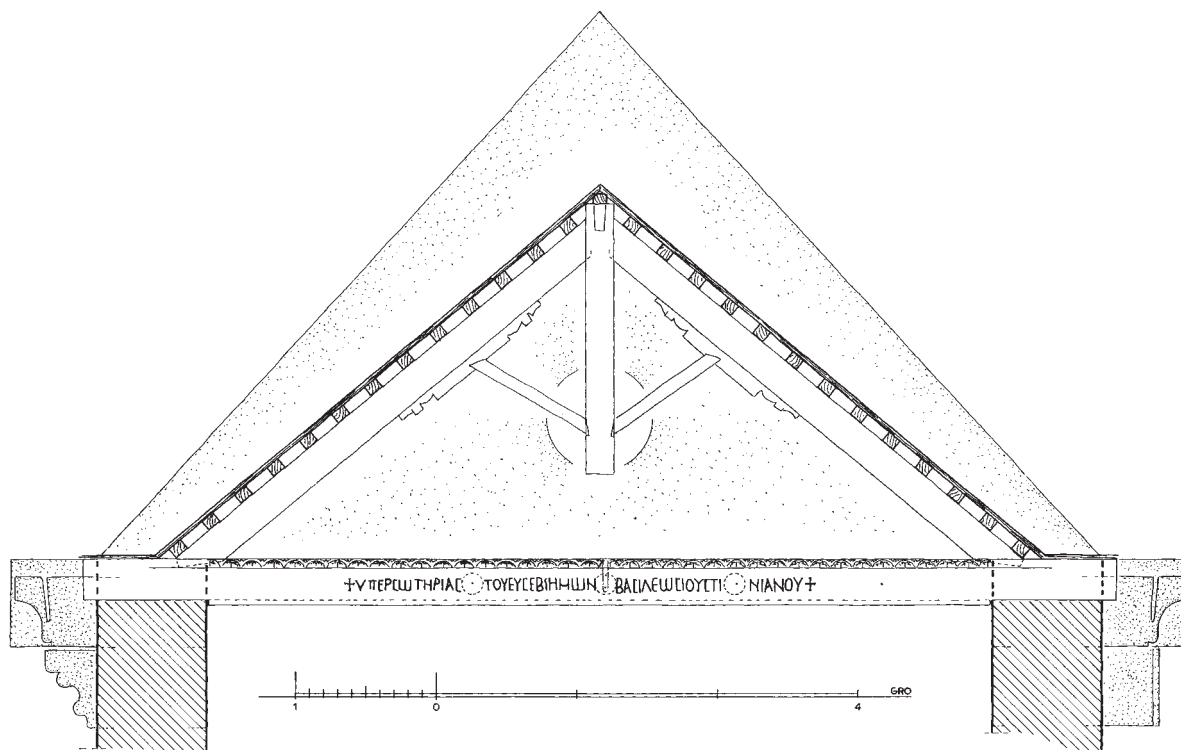


Fig. 1. Heutige Dachkonstruktion, Schnitt (Zeichnung Autor)

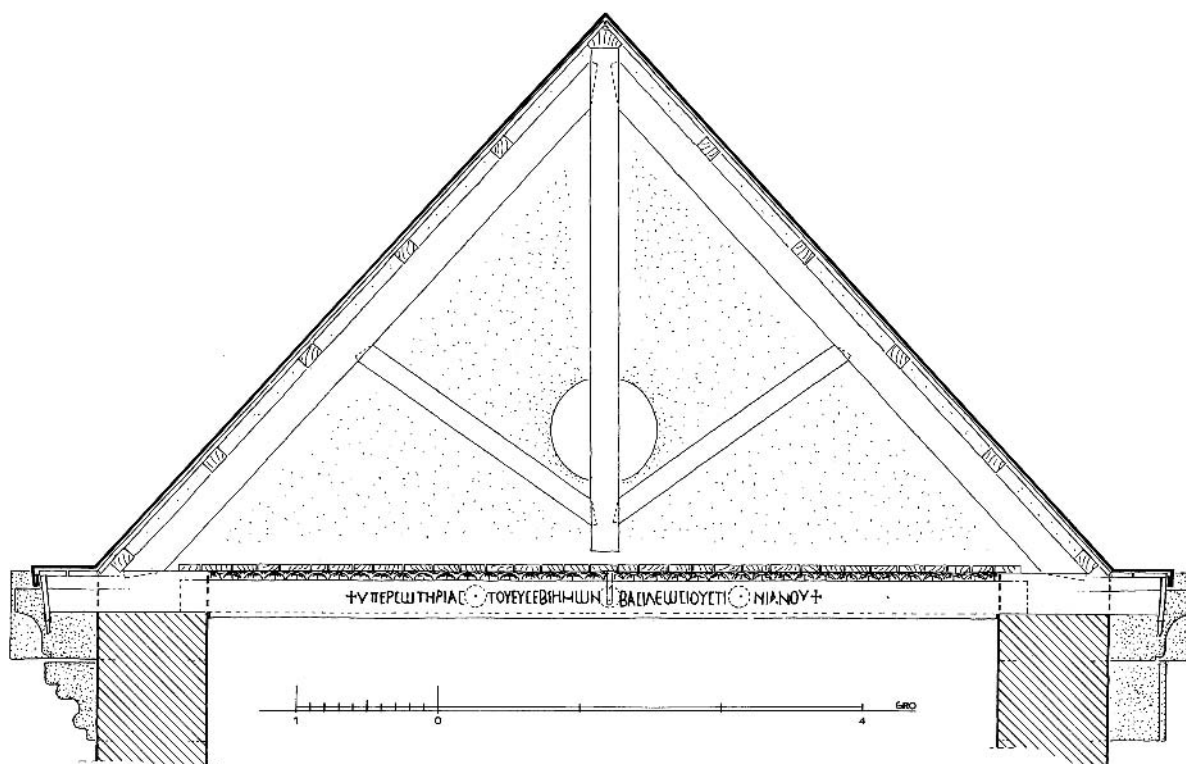


Fig. 2. Rekonstruktion der mutmaßlichen ursprünglichen Dachkonstruktion (Zeichnung Autor)

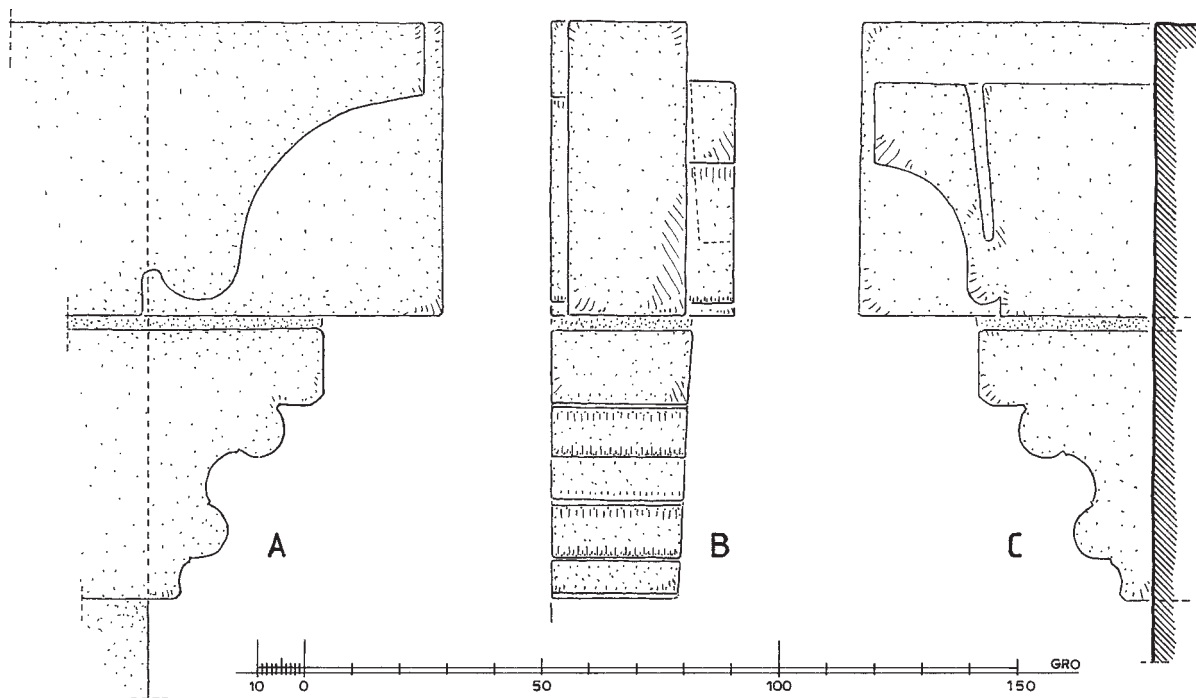


Fig. 3. Kraggeison an der Nordostecke des Mittelschiffsdachs, A = Ansicht von Ost;
B = Stirnseite; C = Ansicht von West (Zeichnung Autor)

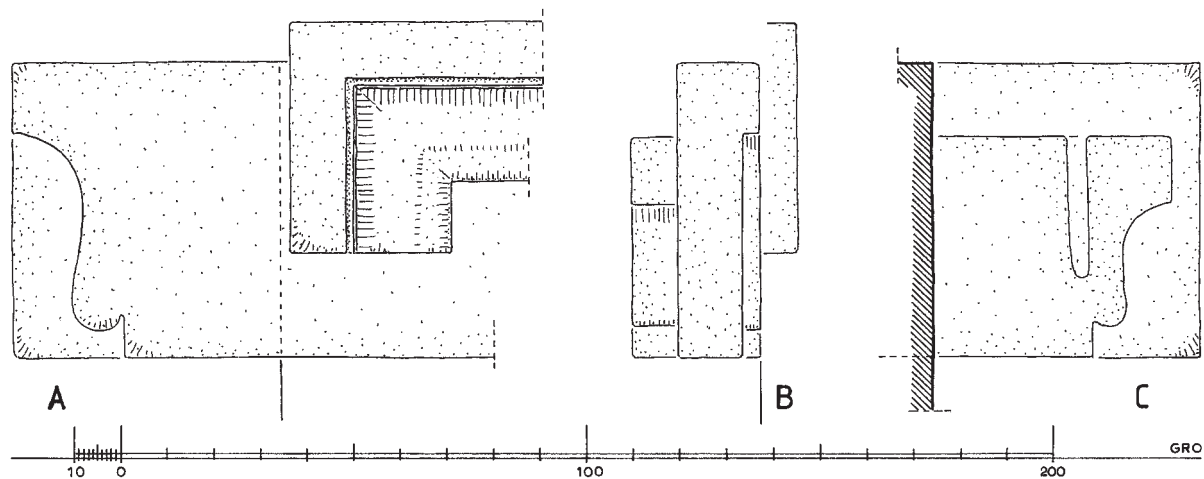


Fig. 4. Kraggeison an der Nordwestecke des Mittelschiffsdachs, A = Ansicht von West;
B = Stirnseite; C = Ansicht von Ost (Zeichnung Autor)

Sparrenanschlüsse zu verschieben, da die originalen Anschlüsse offenbar schadhaft geworden waren. Bei einer den konstruktiven Erfordernissen des Dachaufbaus gerechter werdenden Position sollten diese Einlassungen etwa mittig über der Mauerkrone der Seitenwände des Mittelschiffs zu liegen gekommen sein. Ferner sollten auch die Balkenenden, die heute nur um maximal 0,10 m über die äußere Mauerflucht hinaus vortreten und offenbar in moderner Zeit bis auf diese Länge zurückgestutzt wurden, weiter hinausgezogen gewesen sein, um in eine engere Verbindung mit den an den Seiten der Giebelwände auskragenden Kraggeisa erkennbaren (aber beim heutigen Dach nicht genutzten) Anschlußelementen für weitere Konstruktionsglieder zu treten. Ganz von selbst würde sich durch Versetzung der Sparren an ihre mutmaßliche ursprüngliche Position auch die Diskrepanz zwischen der Neigung des Dachs und der der Giebelwände aufheben, indem die am Fuß weiter nach außen vortretenden Sparren zugleich eine größere Höhenentfaltung verlangen (Fig. 2). In technischer Hinsicht bestehen keinerlei Probleme, die Sparren in eine Position zu versetzen, daß ihre Draufseite nur um etwa die Dicke der Pfetten einschließlich der zur Befestigung der Dachhaut erforderlichen durchgehenden Holzschalung von der Gesimsoberkante der Giebelwände differierte.

Die genannten auskragenden Dekorelemente an den Ecken des Gebäudes, die wir als ‚Kraggeisa‘ bezeichnet haben, sind auf ihrer Rückseite jeweils auf einer Breite von 0,10 m um ca. 0,12 m tiefer ausgearbeitet, was wie ein Auflager für entsprechend bemessene Holzklötze aussieht (Fig. 3b-c, 4b-c, Pl. 4b, 5). Darüber hinaus ist in den vorderen Bereich dieses Rücksprungs ein schmaler, mehr oder weniger senkrechter Schlitz eingeschnitten, der kaum anders als im Zusammenhang mit der Befestigung der Dachtraufe zu verstehen ist³⁴. Im Hinblick auf diese Ausbildung läßt sich erkennen, daß die hier ursprünglich vorauszusetzende Metall- oder Bleidachhaut nicht die Schräge der Dachneigung über die Wandkante hinaus nach außen fortsetzte, sondern entsprechend der seitlich auskragenden Kraggeisa in eine ungefähr horizontale Ebene übergang (Fig. 2), wie das auch bei zahlreichen ähnlichen Dächern in der byzantinischen Baukunst besonders über Gewölbekonstruktionen der Fall ist³⁵.

Die bei den Kraggeisa rund 0,12 m betragende Differenz des tiefer liegenden Auflagers zu deren Oberkante entspricht in der Höhe etwa der mut-

maßlichen Dicke der Pfetten einschließlich der über ihnen folgenden durchgehenden Holzschalung, wie sie als Befestigungsgrundlage für das hier zu erwartende Metалldach erforderlich war. Wenn man die gleiche Differenz auch für den Abstand der Sparrenoberkante und der Draufseite der beiden Frontgiebel voraussetzt, würde die unmittelbar auf jener oberen Holzschalung befestigte Dachhaut in der gleichen Ebene wie über den Frontgiebeln zu liegen kommen und zum Schutz der letzteren einschließlich des andererseits unvermeidbaren Spalts zwischen der Dachhaut und der Giebeldraufseite auch über diese hinweggeführt werden können. Zu beachten ist allerdings, daß die einzelnen Schalungsbretter über den Dachschrägen wie beim heutigen Dach – aber sonst abweichend von dem heutigen Brauch in Europa – schräg nach oben hochgeführt und an den Pfetten zu befestigen waren³⁶, während über der Traufe die entsprechenden Bretter horizontal geführt sein mußten und unmittelbar auf die Deckenbalken aufgenagelt waren, wobei letztere sehr wahrscheinlich zur Erzielung einer mit der Oberkante der Kraggeisa übereinstimmenden Höhe für die Schalungsbretter entsprechend ausgesägt waren.

In die oben genannten senkrechten Schlitzte dürften hochkant versetzte Bretter, sogenannte Stirnbretter, eingelassen gewesen sein (Fig. 2), die als Ersatz für ein Traufgesims den Schutz des witterungsempfindlichen Hirnholzes der vermutlich ursprünglich bis auf ihre Position vorgezogenen Deckenbalken übernahmen. Sehr wahrscheinlich waren sie selbst ebenfalls durch heruntergefaltete Enden der Dachhaut geschützt. Ob sie mit den Balkenenden auf irgendeine Weise verbunden waren, ist sehr wahrscheinlich, zumal wegen der Länge der Kirche mehrere Stirnbretter erforderlich waren, doch dürften diese Bretter nicht unmittelbar gegen die Hirnholzfläche der Balken genagelt worden sein. Man wird sich, wie es auch anderenorts üblich ist, mit hoch stehenden seitlich an die Balken genagelten Laschen beholfen haben.

³⁴ So auch Katsibinis 1983, 268, Fig. S. 269 oben (links und rechts) sowie S. 270 unten (ganz rechts).

³⁵ Zahlreiche Beispiele bei Mathews 1976, passim.

³⁶ So auch Katsibinis 1983, 270, Fig. S. 270 unten; abgebildet auch in Tampone 1996, Fig. 2.152; allerdings wäre nach antikem Brauch mit erheblich weniger Pfetten auszukommen.

Diese vorderen Stirnbretter haben als Ersatz für ein ordentliches Traufgesims zu gelten, wie es bei allen hinreichend hoch aufrecht stehenden syrischen und palästinensischen Kirchen enthalten ist, bestehend zumeist aus einem einfachen Karniesprofil mit unterem Rundstab, darüber ausschwingender Hohlkehle und oberer Stirnleiste³⁷, und wie es in etwas reicherer Ausbildung auch an der Traufe der ebenfalls dem 6. Jahrhundert entstammenden, aber etwas jüngeren Kirche auf dem Mosesberg (Hagia Koryphe)³⁸ enthalten ist. Eine nicht unbeträchtliche Anzahl dieser Blöcke wurde in der Traufe der heutigen Kirche auf dem Mosesberg als Spolien verbaut. Ob auf jenen Stirnbrettern an der Traufe der Theotokoskirche im Kloster ein ähnlicher, in Holzleisten nachgebildeter Dekor befestigt war, ist unsicher, aber nicht auszuschließen.

Wie gezeigt werden konnte, kann die heutige Dachkonstruktion über dem Mittelschiff des Katholikon des Sinai-Klosters nicht mit dem originalen Dach der Kirche identisch sein. Es handelt sich hierbei um eine in neuerer Zeit ausgeführte, in formaler und technischer Hinsicht abweichend ausgeführte Ersatzkonstruktion, die nach Baufälligwerdung des originalen Dachs notwendig geworden war. Wegen der im Gegensatz zu den Deckenbalken nicht vorgesehenen Verkleidung mit widerstandsfähigeren und durch Bemalung geschützten Holzbrettern ist diese originale Dachkonstruktion durch Witte-rungseinwirkung vorzeitig zu Grunde gegangen.

³⁷ Zahlreiche Beispiele derartiger Traufgesimse aus Syrien bietet Butler 1903, 40f, Fig. 15; sowie ders. 1969, 219f.

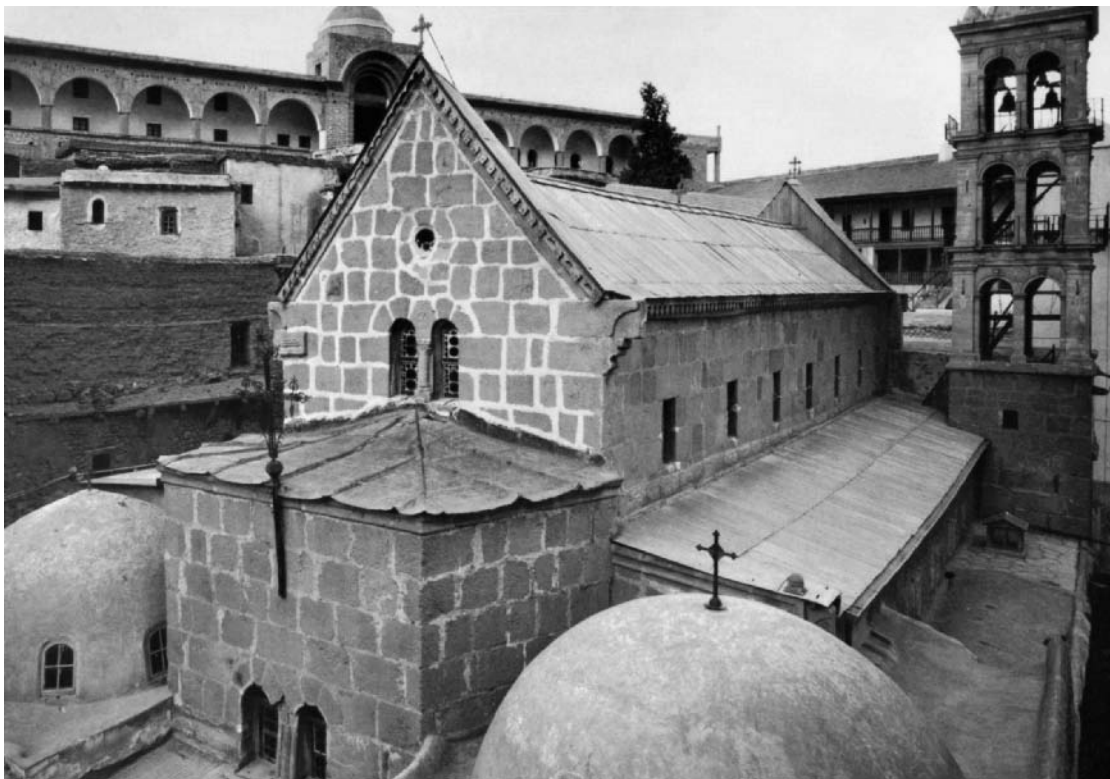
³⁸ Grossmann 1999-2000, 162f, Fig. 3, Pl. 9; s. ferner die Ergänzung der Traufe der Kirche auf dem Mosesberg (Hg. Koryphe) von Katsibinis 1991, 15f, Fig. 1; sowie Graves 1996, Fig. S. 63, außerdem sind die auch hier enthaltenen Kraggeisa in ihrem heutigen Verband nach oben und damit in die falsche Richtung gedreht.

LITERATUR

- Butler, H.C. 1903, *Architecture and other arts*, New York (Publications of an American Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1899-1900, II).
- Butler, H.C. 1920, *Syria. Publications of the Princeton University archaeological expeditions to Syria in 1904-5 and 1909*, II. Architecture, B. *Northern Syria*, Leiden.
- Butler, H.C. 1969, *Early Churches in Syria*, Amsterdam (2nd edition).
- Deichmann, F.W. 1957, 'Untersuchungen zu Dach und Decke', in: K. Schauenberg (Hrsg.), *Charites. Studien zur Altertumswissenschaft (= Festschrift Ernst Langlotz)*, Bonn, 249-264.
- Drewer, L.J. 1971, *The carved wood beams of the church of Justinian, Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai* (Diss. Michigan).
- Edwards, M. (ed. and transl.) 1997, *Optatus: Against the Donatists*, Liverpool (TTH 27).
- Forsyth, G.H. 1968, 'The Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai: The church and fortress of Justinian', *DOP* 22, 1-19.
- Forsyth, G.H. 1979, 'Das Katherinenkloster auf dem Sinai: Kirche und Festung Justinians', in: J. Galey, *Sinai und das Katharinen Kloster*, Stuttgart/Zürich, 49-80.
- Forsyth, G.H., K. Weitzmann 1965, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. The Church and Fortress of Justinian*, Ann Arbor.
- Graves, E. 1996, 'The Monastery of Saint Catherine and the Tradition of Pilgrimage', in: O. Baddeley, E. Brunner (Hrsg.), *The Monastery of Saint Catherine*, London.
- Grossmann, P. 1999-2000, 'Wadi Fayran/Sinai. Report on the seasons in March and April 1985 and 1986 with an appendix on the church at Mount Moses', *ASAE* 75, 153-165.
- Katsibinis, Chr. 1983, 'La copertura in legno del VI secolo d.C. della Basilica di S. Caterina sul Monte Sinai', in: G. Tampone (ed.), *Legno nel restauro e restauro del legno. Atti del Congresso nazionale, Firenze 30 novembre – 3 dicembre 1983*, Vol. II, Milano, 268-271.
- Katsibinis, Chr. 1991, *Evolution architecturale de la basilique du Sinai à travers les siècles* (Diss. Paris).
- Lange, K. 1885, *Haus und Halle*, Leipzig.
- Liphschitz, N., Y. Waisel 1976, 'Dendroarcheological investigations in Israel (St. Catherine's Monastery in Southern Sinai)', *IEJ* 26, 39-44.
- Mango, C. 1976, *Byzantine Architecture*, New York.
- Mathews, Th.F. 1976, *The Byzantine Churches of Istanbul. A photographic survey*, Pennsylvania State/London.
- Sackur, W. 1925, *Vitruv und die Poliorketiker. Vitruv und die christliche Antike. Bautechnisches aus der Literatur des Altertums*, Berlin 1925.
- Schmitt, H. 1956, *Hochbaukonstruktion*, Ravensburg.
- Ševčenko, J. 1966, 'The early period of the Sinai Monastery in the light of its inscriptions', *DOP* 20, 255-264.
- Tampone, G. 1996, *Il restauro delle strutture di legno*, Milano.



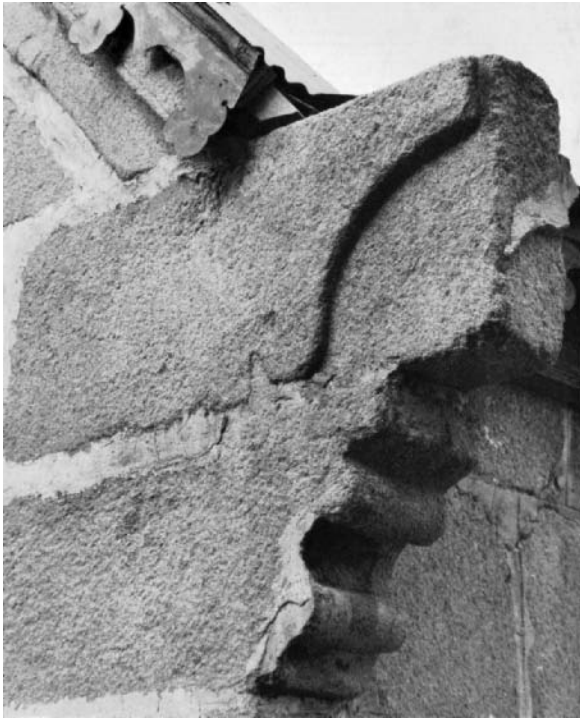
Pl. 1. Blick in den Dachraum (nach Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 82 A)



Pl. 2. Ansicht der Kirche von Nordost (nach Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 35)



Pl. 3. Achter Deckenbalken mit Sparrenverzapfung am nördlichen Ende (nach Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 83 B)



*Pl. 4. Nordöstliches Kraggeison,
A Ansicht von Nordost
(nach Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 41 C);
B Ansicht von West
(nach Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 42 B)*



*Pl. 5. Rückseite des südwestlichen Kraggeisons, Ansicht
von Südost (nach Forsyth/Weitzmann 1965, Pl. 30 D)*



Elite civile et 'mécénat': le rôle du commanditaire dans le développement des arts et des lettres en Egypte chez les coptes du X^e au XIV^e siècle

Adeline JEUDY

Du X^e au XIV^e siècle l'Egypte voit se succéder à sa tête trois dynasties de dirigeants, Fatimides, Ayyūbides et Mamelūks, qui encouragent l'activité artistique qui se développe dans les centres urbains. La production d'objets destinés à la cour du calife/sultan ou à l'élite civile connaît alors un épanouissement considérable. On distingue deux types de décor, sur les objets à caractère séculier et le matériel destiné aux édifices religieux. Dès le XI^e siècle, le «cycle princier» constitue l'essentiel du répertoire figuratif, et met en scène la vie et les loisirs à la cour (Pl. 1). Chasseurs, fauconniers, danseurs, musiciens, princes assis buvant à une coupe, animaux au combat, complétés d'arabesques et d'ornementation végétale, constituent ce décor. On le retrouve sur tous types de supports: bois, ivoire, métal, céramique, stucs, tissus. Parallèlement à ce répertoire figuratif, un décor ornemental constitué de motifs géométriques se développe à partir du XII^e siècle¹. Il est composé de pièces de bois polygonales assemblées et incrustées d'os, d'ivoire et de bois précieux.

L'apport spécifique des artisans du XI^e-XIV^e siècle à l'art islamique consiste en la diffusion auprès d'une élite civile fortunée d'un art impérial auparavant réservé à l'élite princière. L'élite civile est comparable à une classe bourgeoise. Oleg Grabar a attribué la diffusion de ce décor au-delà du contexte princier à un changement radical de goût ayant affecté les arts sous les Fatimides, en particulier au milieu du XI^e siècle². Outre les loisirs à la cour princière, une partie du décor reflèterait les intérêts et les activités professionnelles de l'élite civile³. L'événement déterminant pour la diffusion et le développement de ce répertoire serait la dispersion d'une partie des objets du trésor impérial fatimide, composés de bijoux, verres, objets divers, étoffes, reliques et manuscrits⁴. Ce trésor contenait également les cadeaux offerts par les souverains étrangers (Byzantins, Perses, etc.)⁵. Plusieurs événements en ont permis la diffusion, dont le plus «efficace» fut certainement la liquidation du trésor, pillé en 1068-69 sous le calife al-Mustansir

par ses soldats impayés puis bradé sur les marchés des villes d'Orient⁶. Un autre moyen de diffusion des objets du trésor fut leur exposition lors des processions ou des visites du palais par les foules⁷. Le matériel architectural et le décor du «Palais Occidental» servit vraisemblablement, lui aussi, à véhiculer des modèles iconographiques. Après la destruction des ensembles palatins, déjà bien avancée à la fin de la période fatimide, qui se poursuit et s'achève sous les Ayyūbides, le sultan mamlūk Qalāwūn (1279-1290) rachète ce qu'il en reste en 1284/85 et construit son maristān par-dessus la qā'a Sitt al-Mulk, complété, quelques années plus tard, par la madrasa et la mosquée construites par son fils al-Nāsir Muhammad (1293-1340)⁸. Les frises qui décoraient la qā'a sont retournées et remployées, ornées de motifs floraux sur leur revers⁹.

¹ Les mihrabs portatifs en bois des mausolées de Sayyida Nafisa et Sayyida Ruqayya, datés du milieu du XII^e siècle, constitueraient les premières recherches en matière de décor polygonal. Ils sont conservés au Musée Islamique du Caire et reproduits dans Pauty 1930, Pls LXXV et LXXX.

² Grabar 1974, 183-184.

³ Baer 1999, 385.

⁴ Kahle 1935, 340-361; Meinecke-Berg 1998, 96-97.

⁵ Cutler 2001, 247-278; Meinecke-Berg 1998, 97.

⁶ Den Heijer 2003, 30. La période comprise entre 1066 et 1073 est caractérisée par une grande crise qui touche l'ensemble du pays. Le juge al-Rashid ibn al-Zubayr témoigne à ce sujet: 'Et maintenant, venons-en aux pièces sorties des trésors du palais d'al-Mustansir. C'est la raison pour laquelle les marchés couverts et les places de marché d'Egypte étaient emplis des biens du palais du calife, qui furent sortis au grand jour et vendus aux gens' (voir Shalem 1998, 225).

⁷ Grabar/Grabar 1968, 132.

⁸ Fu'ād 1998, 303.

⁹ Herz 1911, 169-174. Ces frises, qui datent du règne d'al-Mustansir (1036-1094), sont sculptées sur des dizaines de mètres de motifs figurés illustrant le cycle princier et les loisirs à la cour, et furent découvertes en 1911 par Max Herz, lors de la restauration du complexe architectural. La majeure partie est exposée au Musée Islamique du Caire. Il est dit que les travaux, sous Qalāwūn, furent achevés en quinze mois, ce qui expliquerait le remploi hâtif des frises fatimides (Fu'ād 1998, 314).



Pl. 1. Panneau: cycle princier; Musée Copte, Le Caire (photo: Adeline Jeudy)

L'éparpillement et la «contemplation» des objets du trésor ont ainsi permis la diffusion d'un art impérial auprès de l'élite civile urbaine, qui avait les moyens financiers de commander des objets au décor original, copiant celui des objets princiers¹⁰.

IDENTIFICATION DES MEMBRES CONSTITUANT L'ÉLITE CIVILE

L'élite civile, dans le contexte médiéval égyptien, est constituée de négociants, de fonctionnaires et d'artisans. Elle est cosmopolite, dans la mesure où

elle comprend des individus de toutes confessions, aux origines ethniques diverses. Un individu y est défini avant tout par son statut social et son corps de métier, puis ses convictions religieuses. L'élite princière et l'élite civile urbaine encouragent l'élan artistique et intellectuel qui se développe en Egypte, et plus particulièrement au Caire, par le biais de commandes ou de financements¹¹. Les hauts fonctionnaires chrétiens sont au service de l'élite princière musulmane. Il s'agit plus précisément de secrétaires assumant des responsabilités financières et administratives, ou de généraux des armées. L'élite civile comprend également les érudits et les théologiens. Al-Fadl, général des armées sous le règne du calife al-ʿAziz (975-996), est chrétien. Yaʿqūb ibn Killis, ministre d'al-ʿAziz, est lui-même un juif converti à l'islam en 967¹². Severus ibn al-Muqaffāʿ (seconde moitié du X^e siècle) est d'abord secrétaire au service du gouvernement avant de devenir prêtre puis évêque d'Ashmunein¹³. Il est l'auteur du *Kitāb misbah al-ʿaql*, l'un des premiers ouvrages coptes écrit directement en langue arabe, destiné à fortifier le lecteur dans sa foi¹⁴. De la deuxième moitié du XII^e à la première moitié du XIV^e siècle, la communauté chrétienne au Caire, totalement arabisée (sur le plan linguistique), va connaître un renouveau de sa pensée et de sa littérature, un véritable «Age d'Or», spécifiquement lors du court règne des sultans ayyūbides (1174-1250). Les grandes familles qui constituent l'élite civile comptent parmi leurs membres des secrétaires, scribes, comptables et

¹⁰ Grabar 1974, 185; Shoshan 1991, 76.

¹¹ Ce phénomène n'est pas spécifique à l'Égypte puisqu'il est attesté dans d'autres pays du Proche-Orient, par exemple à la cour de Badr al-Din al-Luʿluʿ au XIII^e siècle en Iraq. Nous signalerons que Bas Snelders (Université de Leiden) prépare actuellement une thèse sur ce sujet, consacrée plus spécifiquement à l'étude des objets et monuments réalisés dans ce contexte artistique et dont la construction est financée par la communauté syrienne orthodoxe (Snelders, à paraître).

¹² C'est en référence à al-Fadl et Yaʿqūb ibn Killis, ministre juif d'al-ʿAziz converti à l'islam en 967, que Barhebraeus écrit: 'En ce temps-là, les chrétiens, sans changer leur foi, pouvaient être nommés vizirs dans le royaume arabe d'Égypte. Tel n'est plus le cas maintenant [au XIII^e siècle]. Aujourd'hui, s'ils ne deviennent pas musulmans, on ne leur confie plus l'office de vizir' (Barhebraeus, *Chronography*, 180).

¹³ Griffith 1996, 16-20.

¹⁴ Griffith 1996, 23-27. On attribue aussi à Severus, mais de façon erronée, *l'Histoire des Patriarches de l'Eglise d'Égypte* et le *Tartib al-Kabanut* (voir Den Heijer 1996, 69-74 et Assfalg 1955, 138-163).

érudits¹⁵. C'est le cas notamment des ^cAssâvides, grande famille copte du Caire qui comprend plusieurs générations de secrétaires et de hauts fonctionnaires, du XII^e au XIII^e siècle. Trois frères sont particulièrement actifs de 1230 à 1260, mené par l'un d'entre eux, al-Amjad, secrétaire aux armées sous Najm al-Din al-Ayyūb (1239-1249). Al-Amjad, du fait de sa position, exerce une grande influence sur sa communauté et son rôle de mécène, en particulier dans le domaine littéraire, bénéficie à ses frères écrivains, al-Sāfi, illustre théologien auteur du *Nomocanon* et al-As^cad, auteur d'une traduction de la Bible en arabe. L'intervention d'al-Amjad permet également l'élection du patriarche Gabriel III (1268-1271), qui fut son scribe pendant une dizaine d'années, lequel mentionne dans un colophon de manuscrit les demeures que le kātib possède au Caire et à Damas¹⁶. Tout comme Severus ibn al-Muqaffā^c, Abū al-Barakāt ibn Kabār (première moitié du XIV^e siècle, auteur de la *Lampe des Ténèbres*), commence une carrière de secrétaire avant de devenir prêtre. Lui aussi appartient à une grande famille de notables coptes du Caire, reconnue pour son érudition, qui possède une vaste demeure au Vieux Caire dans un quartier habité par des juges, des fonctionnaires et d'autres notables¹⁷. Outre Severus ibn al-Muqaffā^c, al-Sāfi ibn al-^cAssāl ou Abū al-Barakāt ibn Kabār, les érudits et théologiens Abū al-Makarim (seconde moitié du XII^e siècle), Ibn Sabbā^c (ca fin du XIII^e siècle), Abū Shakir ibn al-Rahib (XIII^e siècle), sont également issus de la «bourgeoisie» cairote. Le cas des officiels chrétiens convertis à l'islam est plus complexe. On peut mentionner Bahrām sous al-Hafiz (1130-1149), Badr al-Jamālī sous al-Mustansir (1036-1094), ou Karim al-Din al-Kabir, Karim al-Din al-Sahir et Ibn al-Ġannām sous al-Nāsir Muhammad (1293-1340). Leur rôle par rapport à leur communauté «d'origine» n'est jamais très clair, puisque certains d'entre eux se sont illustrés comme bâtisseurs de monuments islamiques, tout en ayant occasionnellement pris position en faveur de la communauté chrétienne auprès du calife ou du sultan dans le cas de destructions d'églises¹⁸.

LE RÔLE DE L'ÉLITE CIVILE DANS LA PROMOTION DES ARTS ET DES LETTRES: MÉCÉNAT OU ÉVERGÉTISME?

On observe une continuité, des Fatimides jusqu'aux Mamlūks, du rôle des familles de hauts fonctionnaires coptes au sein de l'administration du pays.

Ce sont elles qui, du X^e au XIV^e siècle, constituent, en partie, l'élite civile du Caire. Ce sont elles également qui sont à l'origine des commandes d'objets somptueux pour orner les églises, ou de la (re) construction et la restauration des édifices religieux. C'est enfin grâce à l'engagement de ces familles que la communauté copte connaît un renouveau spirituel et littéraire au XIII^e siècle. En effet, plus encore que sous les Fatimides, l'élite civile sous les Ayyūbides se positionne comme mécène des arts, encourageant la production d'objets dont le décor reflèterait ses goûts¹⁹. C'est notamment ce que symbolisent les *Maqāmāt* d'al-Hariri: ces manuscrits, dont nous conservons douze exemplaires, sont datés de 1222 à 1337. Ils sont illustrés de miniatures sans rapport apparent avec le texte qu'elles accompagnent, qui dépeignent l'environnement urbain (la maison, la mosquée, le marché, la caravane, la petite ville, la grande ville) et les protagonistes (l'Arabe, le Bédouin, le serviteur, l'officiel, le juge ...) de la «bourgeoisie» arabe²⁰. La portée de telles illustrations demeure restreinte, dans la mesure où elles proposent une vision du monde dans laquelle seule une catégorie limitée de personnes peut se reconnaître. Mais les *Maqāmāt* constituent un exemple caractéristique de ces œuvres produites pour et grâce à une élite érudite et fortunée.

Les commanditaires musulmans ont souvent pris soin de faire apposer leur nom sur l'objet ou l'édifice dont ils ont financé la construction, ces inscriptions constituant une aubaine pour les historiens de l'art lorsque nous en avons conservé les traces. Si de tels documents semblent moins systématiques chez les coptes, un ensemble de sources (inscriptions, graffiti, textes, emploi de motifs particuliers) permet parfois d'identifier le nom ou, au moins, de confirmer l'appartenance sociale du

¹⁵ Sidarus 2002.

¹⁶ Musée Copte Bible 93: Graf 1934, 66; MacCoull 1996, 359.

¹⁷ Samir 2000, 620-626.

¹⁸ Maqrizi et al-^cAyni mentionnent notamment le rôle de Karim al-Din al-Kabir dans des récits de destructions d'églises et la façon (instrumentalisée) dont il convainquit en 1318 le sultan al-Nāsir Muhammad d'épargner (temporairement) plusieurs édifices chrétiens (Little 1976, 562, d'après Maqrizi, *Kitab al-Suluk*, 182-183; al-^cAyni, *Iqd*, fol. 321a).

¹⁹ Grabar 1970, 210; *idem* 2001, 218.

²⁰ Grabar 1970, 211-215; *idem* 2001, 218.

commanditaire d'objets de mobilier liturgique remarquables, de peintures murales ou d'édifices. L'interprétation de ces sources nous permet d'affirmer que les membres chrétiens de l'élite civile se positionnent comme les bienfaiteurs des églises. Ce sont eux qui financent, en partie ou en totalité, les reconstructions d'édifices, le renouvellement du mobilier, la réalisation des programmes iconographiques ou la production des icônes. Ainsi est-ce le cas à l'église Abū Saifein (saint Mercure), située dans le voisinage de Fustāt, dont on distingue trois grandes phases de construction et de restauration²¹. Une restauration est notamment achevée en 1175/76, sous le patriarche Marc III (1167-1189). Abū al-Makarim nous livre de nombreuses informations à propos de cette église dans son *Histoire des Eglises et des Monastères d'Egypte*. Il rapporte notamment que les chapelles consacrées à Mār Yaqūb et Mār Girgis furent épargnées par l'incendie de 1168 et que la restauration de 1175/76 fut l'occasion, pour Abū al-Barakāt ibn Abū Sa'īd Hablān, un secrétaire copte, de faire don d'une coupole d'autel en bois pour le sanctuaire principal de la chapelle Mār Yaqūb²². Abū al-Makarim nous apprend que le donateur a couvert l'ensemble des dépenses liées à la construction de ce ciborium, à l'exception des colonnes en marbre qui le soutiennent, qui furent quant à elles financées par l'Eglise²³.

Il mentionne également que la chapelle Mār Girgis, pourvue d'une coupole, fut érigée à l'initiative d'un autre secrétaire copte, Abū al-Fadā'il Yuhannā ibn al-Khayil, et qu'elle résista à l'incendie de 1168²⁴. Edmond Pauty et Gaston Wiet ont mis en évidence qu'Abū al-Fadā'il Yuhannā, également surnommé ibn al-Usquf (fils du prêtre), était le kātib du vizir al-Afdal Shāhanshāh (1094-1121), fils (et successeur) du vizir converti d'origine arménienne Badr al-Jamālī, une identification que Johannes den Heijer confirme également²⁵. Le vizirat d'al-Afdal nous fournit donc le *terminus post quem* (1094) et *ante quem* (1121) de la construction de la chapelle Mār Girgis et de sa coupole à pendentifs. Abū al-Fadā'il Yuhannā est mentionné à plusieurs reprises par Abū al-Makarim comme le bienfaiteur d'autres églises: on lui doit notamment l'édification d'un autel (église Mārī Minā), la restauration d'un autel et la construction d'un écran de sanctuaire maçonné (Deir Nahyā au nord-ouest de Giza), ou encore la construction d'une église (église al-Adra' à Deir al-Khandaq)²⁶.

Deux écrans de sanctuaire sont entreposés depuis le début du XX^e siècle dans la chapelle Mār Yaqūb (saint Jean-Baptiste) de l'église Abū Saifein. Il ne s'agit cependant pas de leur contexte d'origine, puisqu'en 1884 Alfred Butler signalait leur présence dans une autre chapelle, dédiée à Mār Girgis (saint Georges), dans le triforium nord de l'église²⁷. Il est probable qu'ils furent disposés dans cette chapelle dès leur construction, au Moyen Âge²⁸. Le décor de ces deux écrans reprend le répertoire iconographique particulièrement apprécié par l'élite princière et civile au Moyen Âge. Aux animaux et motifs ornementaux qui décorent les panneaux de ces écrans s'ajoutent des croix et des figures saintes (saints cavaliers, moines, archanges; Pl. 2). Lucy-Anne Hunt date les écrans de sanctuaire de ca 1121; il faut cependant nuancer sa proposition²⁹. On pourrait envisager que les écrans datent de la campagne de restauration entreprise en 1175/76: l'ameublement des chapelles se poursuit en effet à cette période, puisque c'est à cette occasion qu'Abū al-Barakāt ibn Abū Sa'īd Hablān offre un ciborium à la chapelle Mār Yaqūb. Abū al-Makarim signale que la chapelle Mār Girgis n'a pas été touchée par l'incendie de 1168. Cependant, il ne précise pas si elle était déjà pourvue d'écrans de sanctuaire avant l'incendie – ce qui demeure pourtant vraisemblable. Gertrud van Loon pose une question analogue à propos du programme iconographique qui décore la chapelle: est-il contemporain de la construction

²² Abū al-Makarim, *The Churches*, 119, fol. 36b; Maqrizi, *Khitat* (éd. Boulaq), 496; Van Loon 1999, 24-27; Wiet dans Pauty 1930, 7-11.

²³ Abū al-Makarim, *The Churches*, 122, fol. 37b.

²⁴ Abū al-Makarim, *The Churches*, 120, fol. 37a.

²⁵ Al-Khayil, père d'Abū al-Fadā'il Yuhannā, connu également sous le nom de Jean d'Atrīb, était prêtre (voir Van Loon 1999, 25).

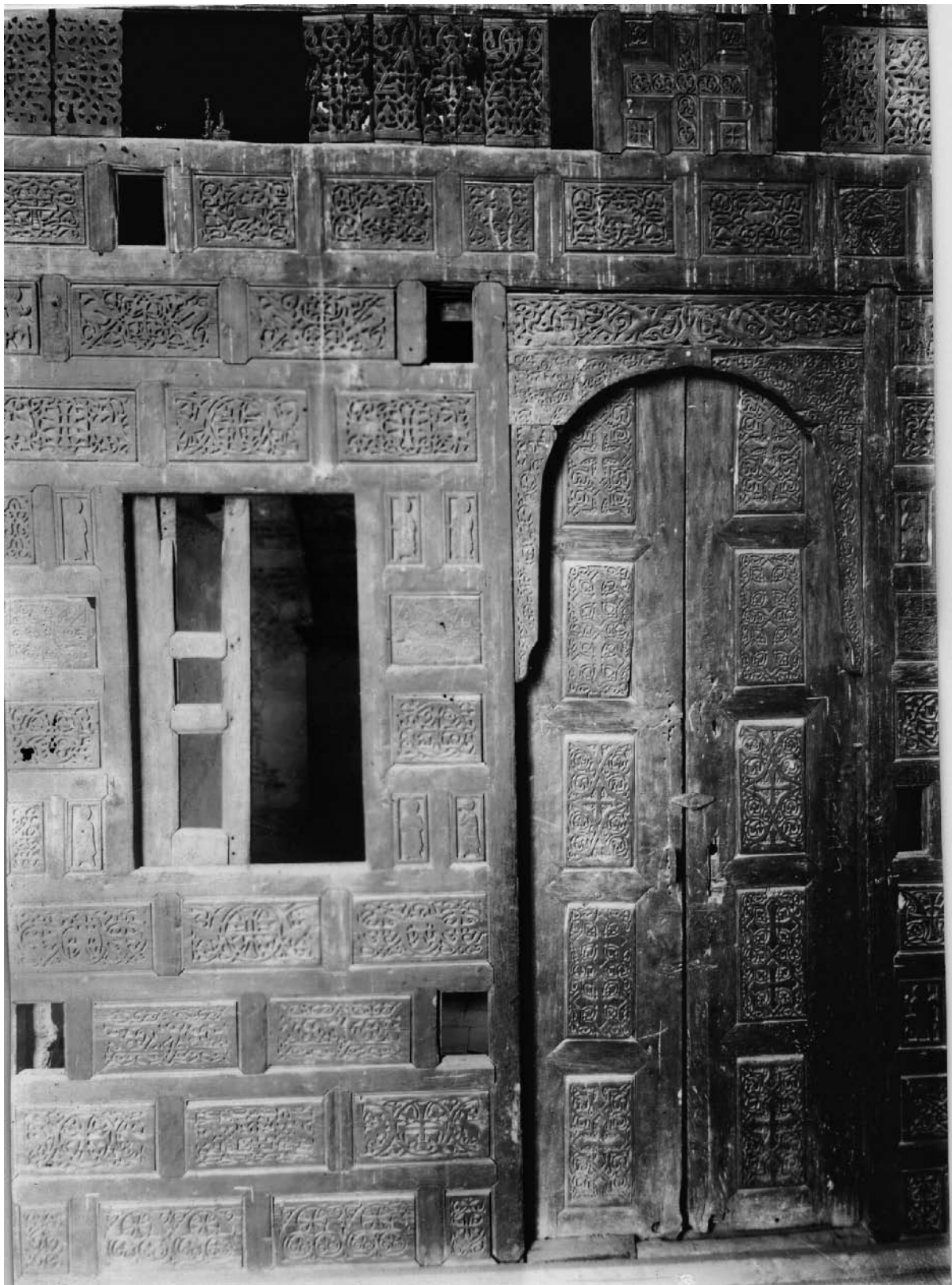
²⁶ Abū al-Makarim, *The Churches*, 115, fol. 34b et 122, fol. 37b; Creswell 1952, 232; Pauty 1930, 29; Wiet dans Pauty 1930, 10; Van Loon 1999, 26. Les témoignages montrent qu'Abū al-Fadā'il Yuhannā exerçait une grande influence dans le cadre de ses fonctions et sur sa communauté.

²⁷ Ces différentes constructions financées grâce au mécénat d'Abū al-Fadā'il sont énumérées par Gertrud van Loon (voir Van Loon 1999, 26, note de bas de p. 122) à partir de leur mention dans l'ouvrage d'Abū al-Makarim.

²⁸ Butler 1884, Vol. I, 123-124. Les peintures murales de cette chapelle ont été étudiées par Gertrud van Loon: voir Van Loon 1999, 17-24. Ils furent déplacés dans la chapelle Mār Yaqūb au début du XX^e siècle par Marcus Simaika, fondateur du Musée Copte.

²⁹ L'un des deux écrans aurait masqué le sanctuaire, tandis que l'autre aurait été disposé dans le khūrus.

³⁰ Hunt 1998, 329.



*Pl. 2. Ecran de sanctuaire entreposés dans la chapelle Mār Yaqūb de l'église Abū Saifēin
(photo: CCMAA)*

de la chapelle ou a-t-il été réalisé lors de la restauration qui a suivi l'incendie³⁰? Un élément, au moins, de ce programme peut être daté de la période de construction de la chapelle: un archange, dans la galerie nord, est pourvu d'une inscription qui mentionne le donateur, Abū al-Fadā'il, et une date, 891 de l'année des Martyrs, soit 1175/76 de notre calendrier³¹. Il s'avère cependant que cette date fut ajoutée à l'inscription officielle par une autre main: s'il est probable qu'il s'agisse d'une référence à la réouverture de l'église, elle ne constitue pas pour autant la datation de l'inscription et par conséquent, de l'archange peint à ses côtés. D'après une analyse stylistique de l'ensemble des peintures, van Loon conclut qu'elles dateraient toutes d'une même campagne de décoration, que l'on peut attribuer à l'initiative d'un certain Abū al-Fadā'il³². L'importance du mécénat des hauts fonctionnaires coptes dans la construction des églises est donc ici mise en évidence. A Abū Saifein on doit une partie de la construction, de la décoration, de la restauration et de l'ameublement des chapelles Mār Girgis et Mār Yaqūb, au cours du XII^e siècle, à la générosité de deux secrétaires coptes, Abū al-Fadā'il Yuhannā et Abū al-Barakāt ibn Abū Sa'īd Hablān.

Un cas d'évêque commanditaire a pu être identifié au début du X^e siècle dans le Wādī Natrūn, à

Deir al-Suriān. Ce monastère est caractérisé par la présence d'une communauté chrétienne mixte copte et syrienne, dans une période comprise entre le IX^e et le XV^e siècle³³. Une communauté syrienne est également installée à Fustāt-Misr, où des tikritains travaillent dans le commerce entre l'Égypte et l'Iraq et possèdent leur propre église et leur propre chef³⁴. Mattay et Ya'qūb, deux moines venus de Tikrit, auraient racheté Deir al-Suriān au patriarche d'Alexandrie, autour de 710, par le biais d'un certain Marutha pour 12.000 dinars. Le monastère, fondé par les coptes autour de 535, avait été ruiné par cinq précédents pillages dans la région de Scētis³⁵. Mais les récentes analyses de graffiti et de colophons de manuscrits entreprises par Luke van Rompay indiquent que le monastère n'était connu sous le nom de Deir al-Suriān qu'à partir du milieu du IX^e siècle: il est plus vraisemblable que les deux moines soient arrivés autour de 800; les coptes n'auraient jamais quitté le monastère, mais auraient toujours cohabité avec les syriens³⁶. La période d'occupation du monastère qui nous intéresse se situe dans la première moitié du X^e siècle, au cours de laquelle Deir al-Suriān est dirigé par l'archimandrite Moïse de Nisibe (ca 906-943). On lui attribue une seconde phase de reconstruction et de décoration du monastère et de son église principale (consacrée à la Vierge), qui marque l'apogée de la présence syrienne dans le Wādī Natrūn. La présence de Moïse de Nisibe à Deir al-Suriān est mentionnée pour la première fois en 906/907 dans un colophon de manuscrit³⁷. On doit à l'archimandrite un enrichissement considérable de la bibliothèque. Un colophon indique qu'après un séjour de plusieurs années à Bagdād, il rentra au monastère en 931/32, chargé de 250 manuscrits³⁸. C'est également sous sa direction que fut réalisé le décor en stucs du sanctuaire, d'inspiration abbasside, dont Mat Immerzeel situe la réalisation entre 907 et 914 (Pl. 3)³⁹. Ce décor est comparable à celui de la mosquée Ibn Tūlun et à de nombreux fragments retrouvés à Fustāt, qui reprennent eux-mêmes des modèles développés à Samarra⁴⁰. C'est encore à l'initiative de Moïse de Nisibe que furent édifiées les deux portes monumentales en bois richement ornées qui ouvrent, l'une sur le sanctuaire, l'autre sur le khūrus (espace intermédiaire entre le sanctuaire et la nef; Pl. 4)⁴¹. Les deux portes sont pourvues d'inscriptions commémoratives en l'honneur de Moïse de Nisibe (Pl. 5)⁴². Ces inscriptions en syriaque sont incisées sur la bordure d'encadrement

³⁰ Van Loon 1999, 27.

³¹ Van Loon 1999, 29.

³² Van Loon 1999, 30.

³³ Innemée/Van Rompay 1998, 190-191: en 1516, il n'y a plus que dix-huit moines syriens pour quarante trois moines coptes; c'est en 1636/37 que le monastère sera considéré, de nouveau, comme un monastère copte.

³⁴ Evelyn White 1932, 312; Fiey 1972-1973, 326-327. Il existe également une 'synagogue des Iraquiens' à Fustāt, attestée au moins entre le XI^e et le XII^e siècle, aujourd'hui disparue mais mentionnée dans les archives de la Genizah du Caire et par Maqrizi.

³⁵ Leroy 1982, 53.

³⁶ Innemée/Van Rompay 1998, 192-193.

³⁷ Innemée/Van Rompay 1998, 187.

³⁸ Fiey 1972-1973, 340-341; Innemée/Van Rompay 1998, 188.

³⁹ Immerzeel 2004a, 1310; *idem* 2004b; *idem* 2008, 66; *idem* 2009, 30.

⁴⁰ Flury 1913; *idem* 1916; Strzykowski 1901.

⁴¹ Des photographies antérieures à la campagne de restauration menée par le Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe ont été publiées dans Palmer-Jones 1911, Figs 6, 7.

⁴² Immerzeel 2004a, 1312; *idem* 2008, 66: par 'autel', il faut peut-être entendre, par extension, le sanctuaire.



Pl. 3. Deir al-Surian: décor en stucs, mur sud du haykal
(photo: Mat Immerzeel)



Pl. 4. Deir al-Surian: portes monumentales entre le khurus et le haykal (photo: Adeline Jeudy)



Pl. 5. Détail de Pl. 4: inscription au-dessus les portes (photo: Mat Immerzeel)

de chaque porte, le long des jambages et sur le linteau; elles fournissent la date exacte de l'édification des portes. Sur la porte du sanctuaire, on peut lire:

*[...] Moïse l'Abbé a souffert et a construit et érigé cet autel de l'église de la Mère de Dieu, au temps des patriarches Mār Gabriel et Mār Yuhannā, en l'année 1225 des Grecs, au mois de Iyor, au quinzième jour. Que Dieu, au Nom duquel il a achevé cela, lui soit une récompense pour toujours et le soit pour chaque croyant qui a acquis une part dans cet autel et ce saint monastère [...]*⁴³.

La date correspond au 15 mai 914 de notre calendrier, une datation effectivement contemporaine aux patriarchats de Gabriel I d'Alexandrie (910-920) et Yuhannā d'Antioche⁴⁴. Des inscriptions similaires peuvent être lues sur la porte du khūrus:

*[...] Ces portes furent achevées en l'année 1238, au temps des patriarches bénis Mār Cosmas et Mār Basil, par les souffrances et à la charge de l'abbé Moïse de la ville de Nisibe. Que Dieu, au Nom duquel il les a faites édifier, lui soit une récompense pour toujours, et le soit pour chacun qui a obtenu de lui [...] saintes prières*⁴⁵.

L'année 1238 des Grecs correspond à 926/27 de notre calendrier. Cette deuxième inscription fait référence aux patriarchats de Cosme III d'Alexandrie (920-932) et de Basile d'Antioche (923-935)⁴⁶. La mention «chaque croyant qui a acquis une part dans cet autel et ce saint monastère» parmi la dédicace gravée sur la porte du sanctuaire laisse supposer que des donateurs auraient investi dans la construction d'une partie de l'église et de son décor. Mat Immerzeel envisage la possibilité d'un waqf investi par la communauté tikritaine de Fustāt⁴⁷. Il est d'ailleurs probable que, deux siècles plus tôt, cette même communauté ait investi un waqf pour permettre aux deux moines venus de Tikrit de racheter

le monastère autour de 710⁴⁸. Ce n'est, d'autre part, pas Moïse de Nisibe qui a directement financé la réalisation du décor (stucs, portes) de Deir al-Suriān ou l'enrichissement de sa bibliothèque: des donateurs extérieurs d'origine iraquienne, très probablement issus de l'élite civile de Fustāt et de Bagdād, sont intervenus en apportant leur soutien financier et des dons de manuscrits. Moïse de Nisibe semble avoir joué avant tout un rôle d'intermédiaire entre les donateurs et le monastère qu'il dirigeait. Se pose alors la question de sa part de responsabilité dans le choix des motifs recouvrant les murs du sanctuaire ou les portes de bois de Deir al-Suriān, motifs puisés dans le répertoire prisé par l'élite civile et princière contemporaine.

Par l'intermédiaire des objets dont elle fait don, les élites introduisent dans le lieu de culte un décor original qui reflète leurs goûts, spécifiques aux objets de luxe. On ne connaît pas l'identité du commanditaire de l'écran de sanctuaire «fatimide» en bois de l'église Sitt Barbara (Qasr al-Šamʿ), conservé au Musée Copte (inv. no. 778; Pl. 6). Constitué de panneaux rectangulaires sculptés, le décor de cet écran rassemble un vaste bestiaire d'animaux affrontés comprenant paons, oiseaux divers, chameaux, lions, gazelles, lièvres, griffons, ainsi que des musiciens, cavaliers et fauconniers, le tout agrémenté de rinceaux et entrelacs. Deux fauconniers à cheval, représentés dans l'encadrement de l'ouverture centrale, rappelle l'iconographie byzantine des saints militaires protecteurs des sanctuaires (Pl. 7)⁴⁹. Ce décor, si caractéristique du goût de l'élite princière et civile au XI^e-XII^e siècle, et que l'on retrouve sur les objets de luxe produits pour ces élites, permet de confirmer l'origine sociale de son commanditaire: il est très probable que ce dernier fut un membre (chrétien) de l'élite civile, familier des objets produits pour les princes, occupant un poste de haut fonctionnaire à la cour fatimide.

Le décor de deux écrans conservés, pour l'un, à l'église al-Muʿallaqa (dans le sanctuaire dédié à Thekla Haymanot; Pl. 8) et pour l'autre, à l'église dite de hārat Zuweyla, ainsi que le décor d'un pupitre provenant de l'église dite de hārat al-Rūm (aujourd'hui au Musée Copte, inv. no. 905), nous donne quant à eux une idée des goûts de l'élite au XIV^e siècle mamlūk. Les compositions géométriques en bois et ivoire incrusté qui ornent ces objets reprennent vraisemblablement des modèles réalisés pour l'élite princière à la cour du sultan al-Nāsir Muhammad (1293-1340), et reflètent les

⁴⁴ Evelyn White 1933, 197.

⁴⁵ Den Heijer 2004, 929.

⁴⁶ Evelyn White 1933, 187.

⁴⁷ Evelyn White 1932, 337; den Heijer 2004, 930; Innemée/Van Rompay 1998, 187; Innemée/Van Rompay/Sobczynski 1999, §30-32.

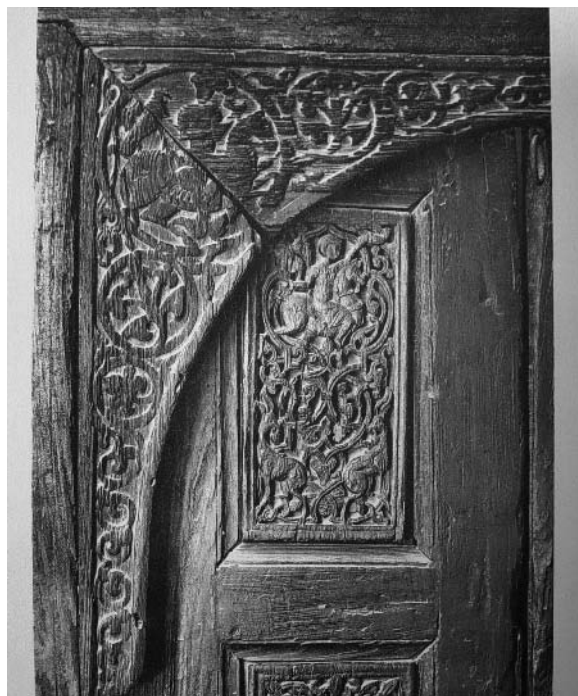
⁴⁸ Immerzeel 2004a, 1312.

⁴⁹ Evelyn White 1932, 315-318 (d'après le MS B.N., Fond Syriaque, no 27); Fiey 1972-1973.

⁵⁰ Pour ce sujet, se référer à Brune 1999 et Snelders/Jeudy 2006.



*Pl. 6. Ecran en bois de l'église Sitt Barbara;
Musée Copte (photo: Adeline Jeudy)*



*Pl. 7. Détail de Pl. 6: fauconniers
(après Pauty 1930, Pl. 14)*



Pl. 8. Eglise al-Mu'allaga: écran dans le sanctuaire dédié à Thekla Haymanot (photo: Adeline Jeudy)

innovations artistiques qui caractérisent le règne de ce sultan. L'église de la Vierge dans le quartier de hārat Zuweyla serait le plus ancien édifice chrétien d'al-Qāhira (par opposition à Fustāt-Misr): Peter Grossmann indique que sa fondation remonterait au IX^e siècle⁵⁰. Dès la fondation de la ville et tout au long du Moyen Âge, ce quartier est caractérisé par une forte concentration de non-musulmans⁵¹. Le sanctuaire central de l'église est pourvu d'un écran au décor remarquable, comparable à celui de l'église al-Mu'allaqa; sa porte ne fait cependant pas partie du décor original et a été ajoutée au cours d'une restauration au XX^e siècle⁵². L'analogie entre le décor de cet écran et le matériel de la mosquée d'al-Maridāni (1334-1343) indique que le commanditaire du premier ait eu connaissance du matériel produit pour le sultan, ses émirs et ses vizirs: il occupait peut-être une place de haut fonctionnaire à la cour mamlūke. Le décor de l'écran copte et du matériel d'al-Māridani est caractérisé par des pièces d'incrustation de forme hélicoïdale, qui composent un décor géométrique plus complexe que le schéma habituel, constitué de «rosaces», que l'on retrouve sur les principaux éléments de mobilier liturgique, copte comme islamique, à partir du XIII^e-XIV^e siècle (Pl. 9). Ce décor polygonal particulier apparaît au cours d'une période d'activité artistique particulièrement riche: le règne du sultan al-Nāsir Muhammad (1293-1340), fils et successeur de Qalāwūn (1279-1290)⁵³. La mosquée d'al-Maridāni, dont une porte conservée au Louvre présente un décor analogue à celui de l'écran de sanctuaire de hārat Zuweyla, a été érigée entre 1337/38 et 1339/40, dans le quartier de darb al-Akhmar par Altunbughā al-Maridāni (1334-1343), émir et gendre du sultan al-Nāsir⁵⁴. L'architecte de cette mosquée, connu sous le nom d'Ibn al-Siyūfi, est également l'architecte en chef du sultan⁵⁵. Déterminé à laisser sa marque sur la ville, al-Nāsir entreprend de grands programmes de restauration, ainsi que plusieurs constructions monumentales (dont une mosquée à la Citadelle, une mosquée à Fustāt, un mausolée-madrasa, un sabil et des palais à al-Qāhira)⁵⁶. Il encourage également ses émirs à construire, en leur offrant des matériaux ou des fonds: c'est le cas avec al-Maridāni, à qui il offre plus de 100.000 dinars dans ce but⁵⁷.

Le panneau central de 77 × 39 cm d'un pupitre provenant de l'église de hārat al-Rūm a vraisemblablement été remployé à partir d'un meuble, probablement d'origine séculière (Pl. 10). Celui-ci devait

cependant être particulièrement luxueux puisque le décor du panneau est réalisé presque exclusivement en ivoire. Il comporte en son centre une pièce en forme d'étoiles à dix branches au centre de laquelle sont représentés un lion et sa proie au combat. Un ensemble de pièces polygonales incrustées forme, autour de cet élément central, une «rosace» sur la base d'une grille décagonale, que l'on peut notamment comparer au décor de panneaux du minbar de la mosquée de Sitt Tatār al-Hijaziyya (fille du sultan Qalāwūn et sœur du sultan al-Nāsir) datant de ca 1360⁵⁸. Un détail supplémentaire, parmi le décor, pourrait constituer un indice quant à l'origine sociale du commanditaire du meuble originel. Deux éléments rectangulaires en ivoire ont perdu leurs incrustations de bois précieux. En leur centre, une petite épée (et non une croix) au pommeau court et à la longue lame est représentée, inscrite dans un motif de goutte inversée (Pl. 11). L'épée, *seif*, symbole de droiture, associée au motif du lion victorieux au combat, constituent une image forte⁵⁹. Le meuble d'origine que ce panneau décorait a probablement appartenu à un membre de l'élite civile ou militaire, qui avait connaissance des goûts de l'élite princière ainsi que les moyens financiers de commander un objet richement décoré.

⁵⁰ Grossmann 2002, 80. Maqrizi rapporte, pour sa part, que l'église fut fondée 270 ans avant la conquête arabe, par un certain al-Hakim Zeilūn (Maqrizi, *Khitat* (éd. Fu'ād), IV-2, 1062).

⁵¹ Behrens-Abouseif 1986, 122.

⁵² Jeudy 2007, 129-132.

⁵³ Anglade 1988, 92.

⁵⁴ Levanoni 1995, 108, n. 120.

⁵⁵ D'autres fragments provenant de cette mosquée sont conservés au Musée Islamique: voir Herz 1895, 20, 27, 80, 109, 174-175.

⁵⁶ Levanoni 1995, 156-173; Salah El Bahnasi 2001. No Frontiers, *Mamluk Art*, 80-82 (<http://www.discoverislamicart.org/>).

⁵⁷ Levanoni 1995, 38, 156: selon les sources littéraires (al-Nuwayri, Maqrizi, ...), al-Nāsir aurait distribué environ 5,5 millions de dirham à ses émirs pour les encourager à construire.

⁵⁸ Anglade 1988, 94.

⁵⁹ Le laqab Seif al-Din ou Seif al-Islam est attribué de manière privilégiée aux émirs mamlūks. Contrairement aux coptes convertis, ils sont les seuls autorisés à porter l'épée et par conséquent, à pouvoir 'défendre' l'islam. On mentionnera cependant le cas unique d'un vizir converti d'origine chrétienne, Bahrām, ministre sous al-Hāfiz, à avoir reçu le laqab Seif al-Islam (Samir 1996, 177).



*Pl. 9. Ecran incrusté à décor polygonal;
Musée Copte, Le Caire (photo: Adeline Jeudy)*



*Pl. 10. Pupitre provenant de l'église de hārat al-Rūm;
Musée Copte, Le Caire (photo: Adeline Jeudy)*



*Pl. 11. Epée; pupitre provenant de l'église de hārat al-Rūm;
Musée Copte, Le Caire (photo: Adeline Jeudy)*

CONCLUSION

Mécènes des arts, les membres de l'élite civile chrétienne le sont également de la littérature: ils financent la publication d'ouvrages théologiques et la traduction en arabe des textes coptes et grecs, et encouragent ainsi la diffusion de la tradition et des valeurs chrétiennes auprès d'une communauté affaiblie, désormais totalement arabisée. On sait notamment qu'al-Amjad ibn al-^cAssāl offrit à son frère al-Sāfi les conditions matérielles nécessaires pour l'écriture de son *Nomocanon*. Al-Amjad encouragea également son autre frère, al-As^cad, dans sa traduction de la Bible en arabe. Le mécénat et l'évergétisme sont l'une des manifestations de la conscience de groupe, ce dernier étant avant tout déterminé par une appartenance sociale, au-delà de l'appartenance religieuse. En effet, qu'ils soient chrétiens, juifs ou musulmans, les membres de l'élite érudite et fortunée partagent des goûts communs, que reflètent les objets créés pour et/ou grâce à eux. L'évergétisme est un phénomène clairement identifiable au sein de l'élite princière musulmane qui, de par la construction de mosquées et de madrasat, fait profiter la collectivité de sa fortune et assure à sa descendance un patrimoine immobilier inaliénable. L'inscription commémorative rappelle de façon presque systématique à quel bienfaiteur on doit tel monument ou tel objet. Nous avons signalé que le troisième règne du sultan al-Nāsir Muhammad fut particulièrement propice au développement artistique, grâce à son intervention en tant qu'évergète et commanditaire, et qu'il encouragea vivement ses émirs à construire leurs propres édifices religieux.

Quelques siècles auparavant sous les Fatimides, al-Afdal (1094-1121), vizir musulman d'origine arménienne, est à l'initiative de la construction de plusieurs édifices religieux. Il constitua certainement un encourageant modèle à imiter pour son secrétaire Abū al-Fadā'il Yuhannā ibn al-Khayil, lui-même bienfaiteur de plusieurs églises dont celle d'Abū Saifein. La promotion des arts par le biais de commandes et de financements n'apparaît pas totalement désintéressée lorsque le nom du généreux donateur, qui fait profiter la collectivité de sa richesse, est clairement associé à l'objet, l'édifice ou au décor produit. Au-delà de l'hommage au bienfaiteur, faut-il voir en cette démarche une stratégie de reconnaissance et de légitimisation d'un statut privilégié? L'élite princière et l'élite civile, qui jouissent d'un statut privilégié au sein de la «société»

arabe, se caractérisent, indépendamment de leur confession religieuse, par leur rôle de mécène. Ces élites commandent et apprécient les mêmes objets de luxe, décorés selon des modèles qu'ils partagent, des motifs interchangeables selon le contexte, qu'il soit séculier ou religieux, musulman ou chrétien. Il est cependant peu probable que le besoin de reconnaissance des élites s'adresse aux plus nécessiteux qui fréquenteront la mosquée construite par tel prince ou s'agenouilleront devant le sanctuaire rénové par tel haut fonctionnaire. Il est plus vraisemblable en revanche que ce besoin de reconnaissance s'adresse à leurs semblables, membres comme eux d'une élite cultivée et fortunée, qui sont à même de comprendre la portée d'un message qui leur est en partie adressé, ainsi que nous l'avons vu dans le cas des *Maqāmāt* d'al-Hariri⁶⁰. Le nom gravé dans la pierre de l'édifice religieux ou le bois de l'objet de mobilier liturgique, tel un moyen d'intercession, est également une façon de se faire remarquer auprès de Dieu, d'invoquer ses louanges pour soi-même et sa famille, et de s'assurer une place de choix auprès de lui le moment venu. Les inscriptions gravées sur les portes de sanctuaire de Deir al-Suriān, notamment, sont assez claires à ce sujet. La véhiculation d'images liées au pouvoir est également une façon de renforcer le statut de l'élite dirigeante et de la glorifier⁶¹.

Le rôle de mécène qu'endossent les élites est continu au fur et à mesure des siècles, au moins depuis l'époque fatimide et jusqu'à l'époque ottomane. Un renouveau artistique est ainsi effectif au XVIII^e siècle, au sein de la communauté chrétienne d'Égypte, encouragé par des fonctionnaires et des religieux influents. Grâce à ces mécènes, des «écoles» locales de peinture d'icônes voient le jour et de grandes campagnes de restauration et de renouvellement du décor des églises sont entreprises (par exemple, à al-Mu'allāqa en 1705 et 1775)⁶².

Cependant, il faut rappeler que si le développement des villes est une caractéristique de la «société» arabe du IX^e au XIV^e siècle, la majorité de la population demeure rurale⁶³. Si la communauté copte

⁶⁰ Lapidus 1984, 175-176.

⁶¹ Le décor des métaux produits au XIII^e siècle en Égypte, Syrie et Mésopotamie est à ce titre assez significatif. Voir notamment Hoffman 2004.

⁶² Guirguis 2004.

⁶³ Garçin 1991, 289-304. Si Le Caire demeure un modèle de développement urbain, d'autres villes connaissent une telle évolution, telles que Shiraz, Alep, Damas, Isfahan, Fès, Herat, Tunis

du Caire se compose d'une élite civile cultivée et fortunée, comprenant des fonctionnaires, des artisans et des négociants, elle demeure relativement réduite par comparaison avec la communauté de Moyenne Egypte⁶⁴. Le fossé culturel n'en est que plus grand, entre l'élite des centres urbains et le reste de la population, rurale.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

Sources orientales

- Abū al-Makarim 1895, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries, Attributed to Abu Salih the Armenian*, B. Evetts (éd. et trad.), Oxford.
- Al-ʿAyni, 'Iqd al-jumān, Topkapı Sarayı Ahmet III MS 2912/4.
- Al-Sāfi ibn Al-ʿAssāl 1927, *Kitab al-qawanin*, M. Girgis (éd.), Le Caire.
- Barhebraeus 1932, *Chronography*, I, E.A. Wallis Budge (éd. et trad.), Oxford.
- Assfalg, J. 1955, *Die Ordnung des Priestertums (Tartib al-Kahanut), Eine altes liturgisches Handbuch der koptischen Kirche*, Le Caire (Publications du Centre d'Etudes Orientales de la Custodie Franciscaine de Terre-Sainte; *Coptica* 1).
- Severus Ibn al-Muqaffāʿ 1948-1974, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, II-IV, A.S. Atiya, Y. ʿAbd al-Massih, O.H.E. Burmester (éd. et trad.), Le Caire (Publications de la Société d'Archéologie Copte – Textes et Documents V, XI-XV).
- Maqrizi 1854, *Khitat* (éd. Boulaq), *Kitab al-Mawāʿiz w al-ʿIṭibar fi Zikr al-Khitat w al-Aṭhar*, II, édition de Boulaq, Le Caire.
- Maqrizi 1941, *Kitab al-Suluk li-Maʿrifat Duwal al-Muluk*, II, M. Mustafa Ziyadah (éd.), Le Caire.
- Maqrizi 2003, *Khitat* (éd. Fuʿād), *Al-Mawāʿiz w al-ʿIṭibar fi Zikr al-Khitat w al-Aṭhar*, IV/2, A. Fuʿād (éd.), Londres.

Articles, catalogues et monographies

- Anglade, E. 1988, *Catalogue des boiseries de la section islamique*, Paris (Catalogue du Musée du Louvre).
- Baer, E. 1999, «Fatimid Art at the Crossroads: a Turning Point in the Artistic Concepts of Islam?», dans: M. Barrucand (éd.), *L'Egypte Fatimide. Son art et son histoire*, Paris, 385-394.
- Behrens-Abouseif, D. 1986, «Location of Non-Muslim Quarters in Medieval Cairo», *AnIsl* 22, 117-132.
- Brune, K.-H. 1999, *Der koptische Reiter: Jäger, König, Heiliger. Ikonographische und stilistische Untersuchung zu den Reiterdarstellungen im spätantiken Ägypten und die Frage ihres Volkskunscharakters*, Altenberge.
- Butler, A.J. 1884, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, 2 vols, Oxford.

- Creswell, K.A.C. 1952, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, I: *Ikhshids and Fatimids, 939-1171*, Oxford.
- Cutler, A. 2001, «Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine Arabs, and Related Economies», *DOP* 55, 247-278.
- Evelyn White, H.G. 1932, *The Monasteries of the Wadi Natrun*, II: *The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and Scetis*, New York.
- Evelyn White, H.G. 1933, *The Monasteries of the Wadi Natrun*, III: *The Architecture and Archaeology*, New York.
- Fiey, J.-M. 1972-1973, «Coptes et syriaques, contacts et échanges», *Studia Orientalia Christiana, Collectanea* 15, 297-365.
- Flury, S. 1913, «Samarra und die Ornamentik der Moschee des Ibn Tulun», *Der Islam* 4, 421-432.
- Flury, S. 1916, «Die Gipsornamente des Dēr es-Sūrjānī», *Der Islam* 6, 71-87.
- Fuʿād, A. 1998, *La capitale de l'Egypte jusqu'à l'Egypte fatimide, Al-Qahira et Al-Fustat. Essai de reconstitution topographique*, Beirut/Stuttgart (Beiruter Texte und Studien 48).
- Garçin, J.-C. 1991, «Le Caire et l'évolution urbaine des pays musulmans à l'époque médiévale», *AnIsl* 25, 289-304.
- Grabar, A., O. Grabar 1968, «L'essor des arts inspirés par les cours princières à la fin du premier millénaire: princes musulmans et princes chrétiens», dans: A. Grabar, *L'art de la fin de l'antiquité et du Moyen Age*, I, Paris, 130-134.
- Grabar, O. 1970, «The Illustrated Maqamat of the Thirteenth-Century: the Bourgeoisie and the Arts», dans: A.H. Hourani, S. Stern (éd.), *The Islamic City*, Oxford, 207-222.
- Grabar, O. 1974, «Imperial and Urban Art in Islam. The Subject Matter of Fatimid Art», dans: *Colloque International sur l'Histoire du Caire 27 mars-5 avril 1969*, Le Caire, 173-189.
- Grabar, O. 2001, «L'art des ayyoubides», dans: *L'Orient de Saladin, L'art des Ayyoubides, Exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, 23 octobre 2001-10 mars 2002*, Paris, 218-219.
- Graf, G. 1934, *Catalogue de manuscrits arabes chrétiens conservés au Caire*, Cité du Vatican (Studi e Testi 63).
- Griffith, S. 1996, «The Kitab Misbah al-ʿAql of Severus Ibn al-Muqaffāʿ: A Profile of the Christian Creed in Arabic in Tenth Century Egypt», *MedEnc* 2, 15-42.
- Grossmann, P. 2002, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten*, Leiden (Handbook of Oriental Studies 62).
- Guirguis, M. 2004, «Ibrahim al-Nāsih et la culture copte au XVIII^e siècle», dans: Immerzeel/van der Vliet (éds.), Vol. I, 939-952.
- Heijer, J. den 1996, «Coptic Historiography in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Periods», *MedEnc* 2, 67-98.
- Heijer, J. den 2003, «Wādī al-Natrūn and the History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria», *Coptica* 2, 24-42.
- Heijer, J. den 2004, «Relations Between Copts and Syrians in the Light of Recent Discoveries at Dayr al-Surian», dans: Immerzeel/van der Vliet (éds.), Vol. I, 923-938.
- Herz, M. 1895, *Catalogue sommaire du Musée National de l'art arabe*, Le Caire.
- Herz, M. 1911, «Boiseries fatimites aux sculptures figurales», *Orientalisches Archiv* 3, 169-174.

⁶⁵ Martin 1982, 206-208.

- Hoffman, E.R. 2004, «Christian-Islamic Encounters on Thirteenth-Century Ayyubid Metalwork. Local Culture, Authenticity and Memory», *Gesta* 43/2, 129-142.
- Hunt, L.-A. 1998, «Churches of Old Cairo and Mosques of Al-Qāhira: A Case of Christian-Muslim Interchange», dans: L.-A. Hunt (éd.), *Byzantium, Eastern Christendom and Islam. Art at the Crossroads of the Medieval Mediterranean*, Vol. I, Londres, 319-342 (reprint de *Proceedings of the Second Woodbrooke-Mingana Symposium on Arab Christianity and Islam: Text and Context. Medieval Encounters* 2.1, Leiden, 1966, 43-66).
- Immerzeel, M. 2004a, «The Stuccoes of Deir al-Surian: a *Waqf* of the Takritans in Fustat?», dans: Immerzeel/van der Vliet (éds.), Vol. II, 1303-1320.
- Immerzeel, M. 2004b, «A Play of Light and Shadow. The Stuccoes of Dayr al-Surian in their Historical Context», *Coptica* 3, 104-129.
- Immerzeel, M. 2008, «Playing with Light and Shadow. The Stuccoes of Deir al-Surian and their Historical Context», *ECA* 5, 59-76.
- Immerzeel, M. 2009, *Identity Puzzles. Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, Leuven (OLA 184).
- Immerzeel, M., J. van der Vliet (éd.) 2004, *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium, Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden 27 August-2 September 2000*, 2 vols, Leuven (OLA 133).
- Innemée, K.C., L. Van Rompay 1998, «La présence des Syriens dans le Wadi al-Natrun (Egypte). A propos des découvertes récentes de peintures et de textes muraux dans l'Eglise de la Vierge du Couvent des Syriens», *ParOr* 23, 167-202.
- Innemée, K.C., L. Van Rompay, E. Sobczynski 1999, «Deir al-Surian (Egypt): Its Wall-Paintings, Wall-Texts and Manuscripts», *Hugoye* 2,2.
- Jeudy, A. 2007, «Masterpieces of Medieval Coptic Woodwork in their Byzantine and Islamic Context: A Typological and Iconographical Study», dans: C. Hourihane (éd.), *Interactions. Artistic Interchange between the Eastern and the Western Worlds in the Medieval Period*, 120-132, Princeton (Index of Christian Art Occasional Papers 9).
- Kahle, P. 1935, «Die Schätze der Fatimiden», *ZDMG* 89, 329-362.
- Lapidus, I.M. 1984, «Mamluk Patronage and the Arts in Egypt: Concluding Remarks», *Muqarnas* 2, 173-181.
- Leroy, J. 1982, *Les peintures des couvents du Ouadi Natroun*, Le Caire (La peinture murale chez les Coptes II – MIFAO 101).
- Levanoni, A. 1995, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: the Third Reign of al-Nāsir Muhammad Ibn Qalāwūn, 1310-1341*, Leiden (Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts 10).
- Little, D.P. 1976, «Coptic Conversion to Islam under the Bahri Mamluks, 692-755/1293-1354», *BSOAS* 39, 552-569.
- Loon, G.J.M. van 1999, *The Gate of Heaven. Wall Paintings with Old Testament Scenes in the Altar Room and the Hurus of Coptic Churches*, Leiden (PIHANS 85).
- MacCoull, L. 1996, «A Note on the Career of Gabriel III, Scribe and Patriarch of Alexandria», *Arabica* 43, fasc. 2, 357-360.
- Martin, M. 1982, «Notes sur la communauté copte entre 1650 et 1850», *AnIsl* 18, 193-215.
- Meinecke-Berg, V. 1998, «Le trésor des califes», dans: *Trésors fatimides du Caire*, Catalogue de l'exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, 96-98.
- Palmer-Jones, W.J. 1911, «The Coptic Monasteries of the Wadi Natrun. Note», *BMMA* 6, 19-29.
- Pauty, E. 1930, *Bois sculptés d'églises coptes (époque fatimide)* (introduction historique de Gaston Wiet), Le Caire.
- Salah El Bahnasi 2001, *The Splendour & Magic of the Sultans*, Philadelphia, PA.
- Samir, S.K. 1996, «The Role of Christians in the Fatimid Government Services of Egypt to the Reign of al-Hāfiz», *MedEnc* 2, 177-192.
- Samir, S.K. 2000, «L'Encyclopédie liturgique d'Ibn Kabar (= 1324) et son apologie d'usages coptes», dans: H.-J. Feulner, E. Velkovska, R.F. Taft (éds.), *Crossroad of Cultures. Studies in Liturgy and Patristics in Honor of Gabrielle Winkler*, Rome, 619-656 (OCA 260).
- Shalem, A. 1998, «L'art fatimide christianisé», dans: *Trésors fatimide du Caire*, Catalogue de l'exposition présentée à l'Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, 225-228.
- Shoshan, B. 1991, «High culture and popular culture in Medieval Islam», *StudIsl* 73, 67-108.
- Sidarus, A.Y. 2002, «The Copto-Arabic Renaissance in the Middle Ages. Characteristics and social-political context», *Coptica* 1, 141-160.
- Snelders, B., *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction. Medieval Art from the Syrian Orthodox in the Mosul Area*, Leuven (à paraître).
- Snelders, B., A. Jeudy 2006, «Guarding the Entrances: Equestrian Saints in Egypt and North Mesopotamia», *ECA* 3, 105-142.
- Strzygowski, J. 1901, «Der Schmuck der älteren el-Hadrakirche im syrischen Kloster der sketischen Wüste», *OC* 1, 356-372.

*The Church at the Jerusalem Gate in Crusader Ascalon: A Rough Tolerance of Byzantine Culture?*¹

Glenn PEERS

The life of Ascalon, now Ashkelon, located north of Gaza on the Mediterranean shore of Israel, has been long indeed, and archaeologists have begun the publication of the remains of that settlement from its prehistoric up to its medieval levels. The Crusader history of the town is still vague – and largely ignored, it must be said –, but as those investigations are completed and published, the final phases may emerge more clearly and fully than they do at present. While a number of sources refer to Ascalon in the twelfth century, the concordances of those references with the archaeological remains are still highly elusive. The defensive structures are clear, as the town was heavily fortified for most of its existence, but the identification of structures within the walls is still not fully determinable. Denys Pringle lists eleven churches for the town in his corpus of Crusader churches, and yet none can be absolutely identified with recorded dedications².

This article examines one of these cryptic structures, a small church measuring approximately 11 × 13 m and preserving some tantalizing clues about church decoration and patronage in the brief window of time comprising Crusader Ascalon (Fig. 1). The church is on the northeastern edge of the city, south of the Jerusalem Gate. It has been partially published in the first volume of the Ashkelon excavation series, which is the record of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon, and which began to appear in the summer of 2008³. Much still needs to be done, even on this single structure, and without final and complete publication of plans, stratigraphy and small finds found in the building, this article can only claim to be a provisional argument. In the event, the building comprises three phases, it would appear:

1. An initial phase dated to the fifth century, which is the building's core, since it was not fundamentally altered before its destruction. This core comprises a three-aisled basilica, with apses ter-

minating each aisle at the east end, and with the central apse substantially larger than the northern and southern apses. The roof was evidently timber. The building may have originally been a baptistery, but the font, still evident, has not been explained by the excavators.

2. An intermediate phase when it may have been converted to a mosque. The traces of that conversion are not evident yet, and the use of the building as a mosque rests, for now, on its hypothetical identification as the al-Khadr and then the Church of the Mary Viridis, that is the Green Mosque or St Mary the Green (not apparently Elijah or George as al-Khadr, in this case).
3. The final phase is the real subject of this article, the last occupation of the building as a Christian church, when it was renovated or restored in the period of Crusader occupation of the town, which took place between 1153 and 1187 (Pl. 1).

The evidence on which the dating of the last phase of the church is based is not absolute, and again in anticipation of the final report on the church, the probability of the dating must hold. The fragments of frescoes fall into a group of comparable commissions of this period, one can say with some certainty. The Crusader period was brief, to be sure, and the town was then razed three times before it was left desolate in 1247. So the church can be approached as a monument that sheds particular illumination on church building and decoration in the final decades of the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

¹ Many thanks to Anthony Cutler, Emma Maayan Fanar, Haim Goldfuss, Cecily Hilsdale, Mat Immerzeel, Herbert Kessler, Mati Meyer, Amy Papalexandrou, Na'ama Pat-El, Denys Pringle, Moshe Sharon, and Lawrence Stager for their collegial advice and support in this project.

² Pringle 1993-2007, I, 61-69; see also Le Strange 1890/1965, 400-403; Petersen 2005, 83-85; Schick 1995, 251-253.

³ Tzaferis/Stager 2008.

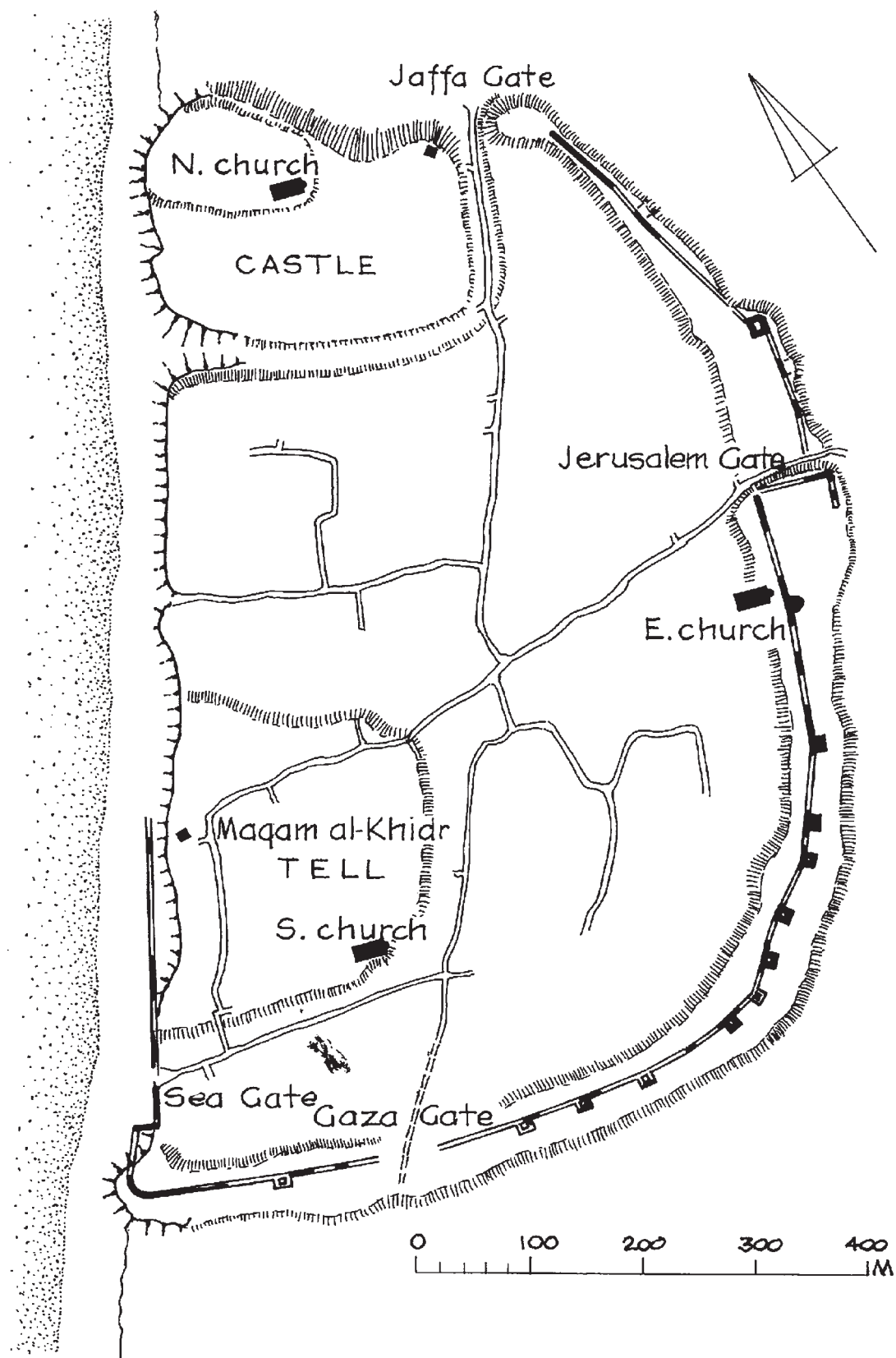


Fig. 1. Crusader Ascalon Plan (source: Pringle 1993-2007, I, 62, Fig. 19)

Moreover, the small church can also tell us a good deal about Frankish attitudes towards indigenous Christians, for the remains of the church reveal that the decoration and rebuilding were not intended, at least not overtly, for a Frankish congregation. And it can tell us about Eastern Christian self-definition in the complicated period and region. This article will concern itself with four principal pieces of evidence so far made available to scholars: in the first place, fragments of fresco were found in the lower part of the eastern apse of the church (Pl. 2). These frescoes show the badly damaged remains of four Church Fathers, who are turning in pairs toward the central axis of the apse. Parts of the figures survived (though as of December 2008 they were practically invisible; Pl. 3); no single figure was complete; and each was holding an open scroll that contain still-legible traces of excerpts from liturgical prayers (Pl. 4). Despite the lack of inscriptions nominating the figures, the probability is that the four included Sts John Chrysostom, Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian, as well as a fourth whose identity can only be conjectured. The relationship of this iconography to other instances of officiating Fathers in the apse, both in the Byzantine world and in the Christian East, will be an essential aspect of this article. Second, a small passage of non-figural fresco in the south aisle shows affinities with other non-figural frescoes in this period (Pl. 5).

In the third place, Moshe Sharon has edited a fragmentary inscription from the south, secondary niche (Pl. 6). The inscription can be rendered,

[أذكر يا رب عبدك الخا]طي المندر[يلك ؟]
Remember O Lord Thy sinful slave the (Archi)
*mandrite (?) (Pl. 7)*⁴

Precious evidence, certainly, but like so much else at Ashkelon, elusive. And yet the combination of languages is important: between 1153-1187, evidently a local Melkite community either restored a church at Ascalon or a new group entered with the Crusaders and was granted a church. In both situations, Melkites preserved essential elements of their confession: adherence to a Greek patristic heritage, as revealed by the Fathers in the apse, and to a Byzantine rite, likewise shown through the Greek inscriptions held by the Fathers, and a use of Arabic for social communication. This combination of features is a defining characteristic of Melkites, and it

allows an identification of the community that had main access to the church, even if that occupation cannot be said to be exclusive of others.

Finally, the church underwent renovations when the town became occupied by Crusaders, and the three-aisled basilica was converted to a centrally planned building (Pl. 8). This renovation is not entirely clear. Despite the uncovering of the church in 1985, a full set of plans has not been published, and the twelfth-century changes to the church focused on the elimination of the two western columns in the nave; the consequence appears to have been the creation of a central crossing that was formed by the surviving four columns. For now, the roofing must be conjectural, but one would normally hypothesize that such an alteration would have been for the creation of a domed, centrally-focused interior.

These four elements, however fragmentary and ambiguous they are given our current understanding of the site, allow questions to be posed about art and identity in the Frankish east, about cultural and social relations amongst Christian confessions in the region, and about the accuracy of the distorting mirror that historians hold up to the Crusader world. Christopher MacEvitt's recent book, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East* (2008), presents a challenging historical model for understanding the interaction of Christians in the Middle East during the twelfth century. MacEvitt argues that Crusaders treated other Christian groups in their new kingdom according to western conventions, not according to Muslim division and rule of confessional communities, and that they permitted a degree of local freedom in exchange for allegiance to the new Christian regime. He calls this accommodation 'rough tolerance' – an attitude, rather than an ideology. This kind of tolerance permitted leniency in religious and social matters, but lapsed occasionally under political and military pressures.

Ascalon provides an instance where Crusader rulers apparently encouraged re-settlement and appeasement of local Christians, and this article looks at the church by the Jerusalem Gate to examine the role art played in that process of 'rough tolerance'. Perhaps local officials were following

⁴ Sharon 1997-, IV, 8-9. With real generosity, Professor Sharon shared this passage from the latest volume of his *Corpus inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae*, which had not yet been published.



Pl. 1. Jerusalem Gate Church, Ashkelon, View (source: author)



*Pl. 2. Jerusalem Gate Church, Ashkelon,
Central Apse Fresco,
(source: Tzaferis/Stager 2008, 401, Fig. 21.3)*



*Pl. 4. Jerusalem Gate Church, Ashkelon,
Central Apse Fresco (detail),
(source: Tzaferis/Stager 2008, 401, Fig. 21.4)*



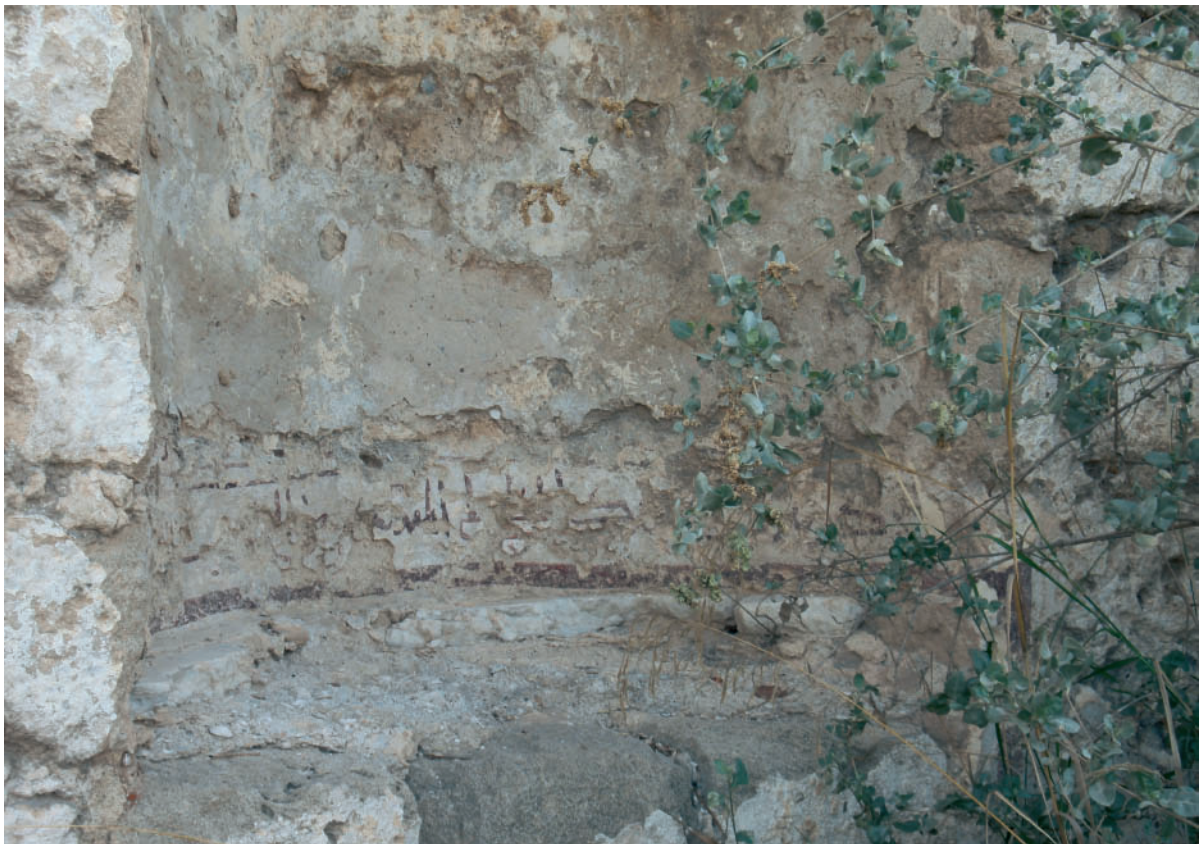
Pl. 3. Jerusalem Gate Church, Ashkelon, Central Apse Fresco (current state) (source: author)



*Pl. 5. Jerusalem Gate Church, Ashkelon,
Non-figural fresco, south wall nave (source: author)*



*Pl. 6. Jerusalem Gate Church,
Ashkelon, South-eastern niche
(source: author)*



Pl. 7. Jerusalem Gate Church, Ashkelon, South-eastern niche (detail) (source: author)



Pl. 8. Jerusalem Gate Church, Ashkelon (source: Tzaferis/Stager 2008, 400, Fig. 21.1)

a policy of encouraging indigenous Christians to create a community, and if so, the choices made by the local Melkite Christians were noteworthy. For the architecture and decoration were in the mainstream of art being produced within the Byzantine Empire itself. In that sense, one has to ask if such choices also expressed allegiance with that political entity, which was not, naturally, working in concert with Crusader politics. The degree to which Melkites felt connections to Byzantium is often difficult to assess, but in matters of theology and liturgy, the connection was a distinguishing feature of their confession amongst the many in the Middle East. And, as examples below will demonstrate, the iconography of the hierarchs and the bilingual nature of inscriptions are found in non-Byzantine monuments in the Middle East, namely in present-day Israel-Palestine and Syria, and from Crusader Constantinople. This article probes what the possible meanings of Byzantine are, therefore, when religious and political allegiances were possibly under pressure. In this context, did art, architecture and language clearly reveal identity? Or are those cultural elements overdetermined and cannot reveal specifics of their making and meaning? Elements of style and iconography do indicate communal self-definition, I will argue. A *lingua franca* can have various inflections both for Christians in the eastern Mediterranean and for Melkites as a special subset of that religion. The *lingua franca* was international, but had local valences, too.

The clues offered by the church by the Jerusalem Gate at Ashkelon are meager, but they are sufficient to gain insight into Frankish 'rough tolerance' of their co-religionists and into Melkite identity. Before examining what we can learn, we need also to acknowledge the limitations of our knowledge. Despite efforts by the excavating team, the designation of this church as St Mary of the Green cannot be proved; no information has been revealed that would allow that identification to stand⁵. This inability is a pity, because sources mention that church

and refer to its previous use as a mosque. No such evidence exists for the Jerusalem Gate Church, at least as far as the first major publication indicates. The church shows no sign of prior destruction, which would make its identification as the Green Church more likely. Until 939, a large church had existed at Ascalon, when a mob comprising both Muslims and Jews destroyed it, '...pillaged all that they found in it, and then burnt it. The Jews helped the Muslims to demolish it. The Jews had lit brushwood and carried it on the ends of poles to the top of the roof, which burnt; the lead melted and the columns fell'⁶. The Orthodox bishop appealed to the caliph in Baghdad for permission to re-build, but he was refused, and the see then transferred to Ramla, 'The demolished church remained in that state. The Muslims of Ascalon agreed not to allow it to be restored.' Perhaps the building was restored and became the Green Mosque, but that is not certain; it was also given by the Canons of the Holy Sepulcher in 1160 to Amalric, count of Jaffa-Ascalon, but it is not clear that they ever renovated the mosque⁷. In other words, the building cannot be named with any security at all, and so direct associations of the building with Muslims and Franks cannot be sustained here. In that case, the evidence provided by the building itself has to be sufficient.

The fragments of the frescoes are a precious piece of evidence, therefore, and they lead in fruitful directions, in fact, despite their poor condition. The four figures were evidently full-length and standing, and were turned toward the central axis of the apse; another pair of hierarchs is feasible, given the space between the plaster and the corner of the apse (Pls 2, 4). The hierarchs were wearing vestments with alternating crosses (*polystavrion*) and the episcopal pallium (*omophorion*), and with their right hands, they extended a scroll diagonally across their bodies. The inscriptions, which would have nominated each of the hierarchs, are lost, but enough of the liturgical inscriptions were legible to make reasonable guesses about their identity. Beginning at the left-hand side of the surviving passage of fresco, the scroll showed the beginning of the prayer of the first antiphon from the Liturgy of John Chrysostom (ΚΥΡΙΕ Ο ΘΕΟΣ ΗΜΩΝ...), the second the prayer of the Prothesis (Ο ΘΕΟΣ Ο ΘΕΟΣ ΗΜΩΝ Ο ΤΟΝ ΟΥΡΑΝΙΟΝ ΑΠΤΟΝ...), and the third the prayer of the Trisagion (Ο ΘΕΟΣ Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ Ο ΕΝ ΑΓΙΟΙΣ ΑΝΑΠΟΥΘΟΜΕΝΟΣ...); the fourth figure's scroll was not extant⁸.

⁵ Tzageris/Stager 2008, 399 n. 122, and see Pringle 1993-2007, I, 63-64.

⁶ Kratchkovsky/Vasiliev 1924-1932, here 1924, 719.

⁷ Bresc-Bautier 1984, 132-134 (49); Röhricht 1893, 93 (356).

⁸ See Babić/Walter 1976, 270-271 (their 2, 1, and 6, respectively), and Gerstel 1999, as well as Sevchenko 2006, 127-153, and *idem* 2008, 734.

Fine work has been done on the iconography and meaning of officiating hierarchs in the apse of Byzantine churches, foremost Sharon Gerstel's book of 1999, and that data alone allows comparisons to be made between Byzantine churches from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries and the Ascalon church of the second half of the twelfth. The three texts from the partial fresco there are not uncommon, but they are found together only in five Byzantine churches, which date from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries⁹. The figures were in all likelihood Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom and Basil the Great, but the fourth can be any number of figures, such as Athanasios, Nicholas or Gregory Thaumaturgos. Only the church of St Panteleimon at Nerezi (1164; former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) has those three texts from Ascalon and those other possible figures, because eight hierarchs in total are found in that program¹⁰. Strikingly, the parallels with the selection of texts are strongest in the Byzantine regions of Macedonia and Epirus, and for that reason, one might be able to make a case for Byzantine involvement in the decoration of the church, that is to say, through a workshop trained in a fully Byzantine tradition of art and liturgy. And artists did travel from Byzantium to the Crusader Kingdom and had opportunity to take part in redecoration of churches in the newly conquered town of Ascalon. At this time, the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1143-1180) may have sent out a team of artisans to decorate the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem with mosaics, and the patrons and the artists are commemorated in inscriptions there¹¹. The Christian names of the artisans, Ephrem (in Syriac) and Basil (in Greek and Latin), do not provide us with enough information alone to know their origins and trainings¹².

The possibility certainly exists that the Ascalon frescoes were done by artisans trained in, or very much aware of, Byzantine practice, and the connections with the Macedonian churches in figures and texts are suggestive. The modelling of figures, the handling of drapery and the turning of the bishops in a not-unconvincing version of three-dimensional space are comparable in these examples. And those features indicate some filiations between the frescoes at Ascalon and the Macedonian examples, though the Ascalon frescoes are probably too fragmentary to say much more about formal characteristics that would establish firm filiations with contemporary Byzantine models.

Other clues about filiation survive in the church at Ascalon, though they are equally fragmentary. On the dado course of the south wall of the nave, one small section of decoration is extant still (Pl. 5); this portion of a (presumably once-extensive) non-figural component of the program shows alternating bands of diagonal striations with wavy complementary lines. Such decorative passages are a strong feature of the program at the Church of the Hospital of Saint-John at Emmaus, now Abu Gosh, located a short distance west of Jerusalem (Pl. 9)¹³. Discrete blocks of non-figural frescoes decorate the faces of large pillars in the nave and the arches in the eastern end of the church (Pl. 10). This comparison of non-figural painting in these two churches has the advantage of matching secondary areas, where hands would not really be distinguishable and where common workshop practice could be revealed. It is also, one must admit, not secure, but the frescoes at Abu Gosh have been dated to 1170, a date that fits perfectly well for the church at Ascalon, too. Moreover, in the lower register of the central apse, which has a very unusual scene of the Anastasis, traces of figures are identifiable (Pl. 11)¹⁴. One figure is wearing a pallium decorated with geometric cross and floral designs; it is also a frontal figure with one hand blessing and the other holding a staff (Pl. 12). So the iconography diverges from the description of the fathers at Ascalon, but the convention of a church official in the lower zone of the central apse is common to both churches, at least. The conclusion one could draw is that a workshop trained in Byzantine practices, or well aware of them, executed a program for Frankish patrons at Abu Gosh and also for Melkite patrons at Ascalon. Both appear to reveal artisans able to work in a Byzantine formal idiom but tailored according to the expectations and habits of different confessional groups.

The real question is whether it would matter if filiations could be established. That is to say, does iconographic or stylistic similarity have meaning, and what could it be? Stylistic or formal affinities amongst those two churches in the Holy Land and

⁹ Babić/Walter 1976, nos 5, 13, 18, 19, 35.

¹⁰ Sinkević 2000.

¹¹ Folda 1995, 347-356; Kühnel 1994, 57-58; Kühnel 1993/1994.

¹² See Folda 2008, 51.

¹³ See Kühnel 1988, 159-180; see also Boiret 1998.

¹⁴ Kühnel 1998, 153, Pl. XLI.



*Pl. 9. Church of the Hospital of Saint-John (Emmaus),
Abu Gosh, Interior (source: author)*



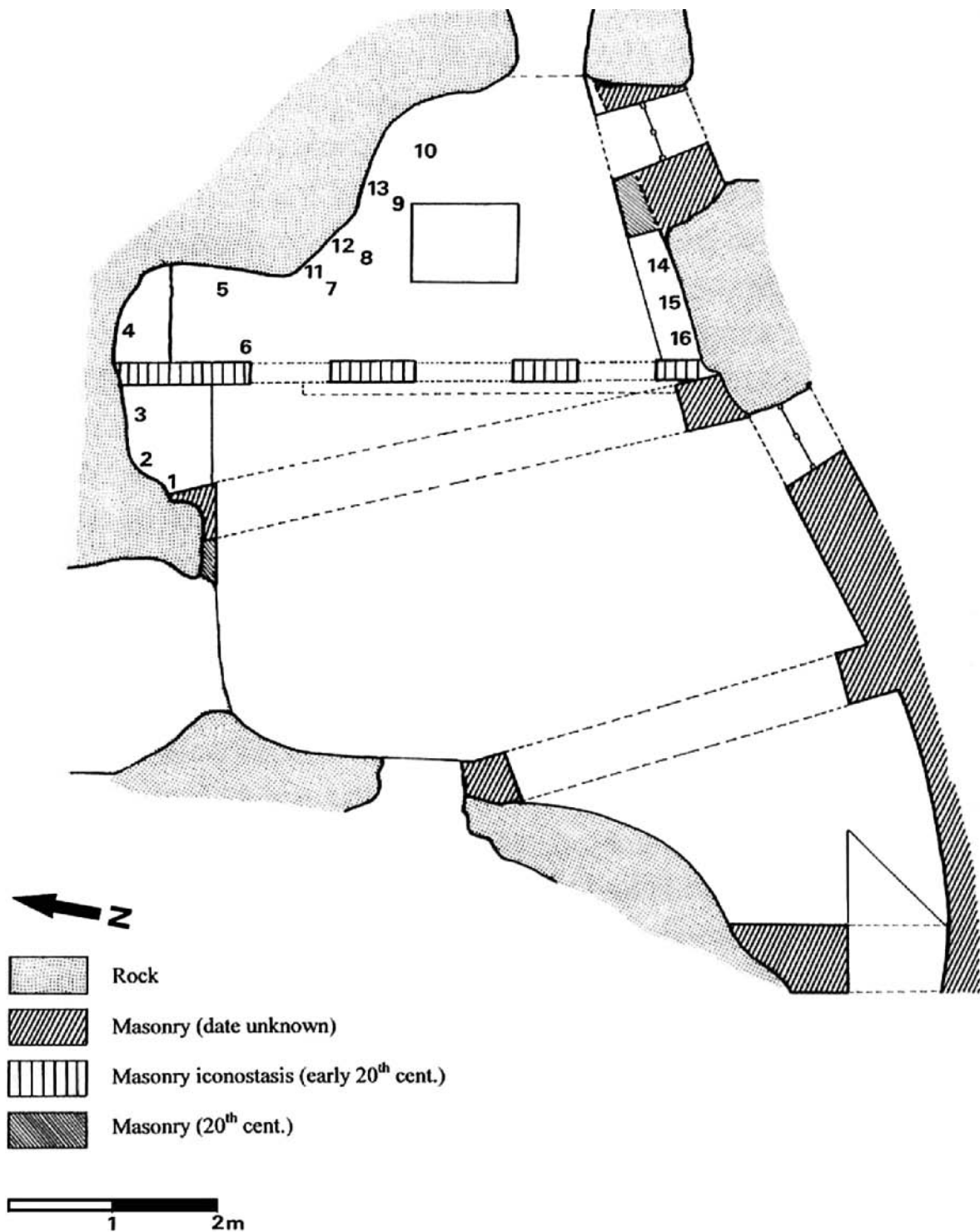
*Pl. 10. Church of the Hospital of Saint-John (Emmaus),
Abu Gosh, Non-figural fresco (source: author)*



*Pl. 11. Church of the Hospital of Saint-John
(Emmaus), Abu Gosh, Central apse (source: author)*



*Pl. 12. Church of the Hospital of Saint-John
(Emmaus), Abu Gosh, Central apse (source: author)*



- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Female saint | 6. Ascension of Elijah | 13. Bishop |
| 2. St Demetrius | 7-9. Anonymous saints | 14. St Athanasius |
| 3. St George | 10. Virgin of the Deisis | 15. St. John Chrysostom |
| 4. St Nicholas | 11. Virgin | 16. Deacon |
| 5. Virgin Enthroned | 12. St Antipas | |

Fig. 2. Plan of the Chapel of Mar Elias, Ma'arrat Saydnaya (source: Immerzeel 2009, Fig. 4)

the Macedonian examples, like at Nerezi, reveal an international formal idiom that presumably carried the weight of what one could call an avant-garde traditionalism. The current style of the third quarter of the twelfth century clearly travelled well and was appreciated for its new naturalism and emotionalism, and also for the depth of its history in Christian art. In that sense, the manner in which the fathers lean forward and turn in space to reveal their rolls shows affinities with formal features typical of the Komnenian style, for example at Nerezi and Abu Gosh.

Focusing on the iconography of the fathers or hierarchs, one could ask if their inclusion helps make a claim to a political, religious or cultural allegiance in a case like Ascalon. The liturgical commitment of the Arabic-speaking Melkites to the Greek rite was an important aspect of their confessional self-identity. Melkite attachment to Byzantium as a political entity was weak¹⁵. Inclusion of church fathers has also been interpreted by scholars to bear political meaning. So, for example, when the Franciscan friars decorated a new chapel in a complex in Istanbul now known as Kalenderhane Camii, they not only included a figure of St Francis and scenes from his life in the apse, but also two large-scale Greek church fathers on the arch leading into the apse. The decoration was done sometime between about 1230 and 1261, when the Latin occupation of Constantinople ended, and later than the Ascalon frescoes, of course, but the Kalenderhane frescoes reveal western accommodation to a Greek setting to the degree that the fathers, twice the size of Francis himself, frame the figure and vita scenes of that saint. The reasons may have been a desire to manifest sympathy toward union of the churches, which had been discussed widely in the period, or to draw out comparisons between Francis and the social and mystical significance of the work of John Chrysostom, the one figure in the pair who can be identified¹⁶.

Church fathers and hierarchs in sanctuaries are common outside the territory controlled by Byzantines and Franks, and their frequency makes it difficult to decide on their significance¹⁷. For example, in present-day Syria, the recently published frescoes in the rock-cut chapel of the Prophet Elijah at Ma'arrat Saydnaya (approximately 25 km north of Damascus) reveal four Greek, scroll-bearing hierarchs turned toward the center of the apse (Figs 2, 3; Pl. 13)¹⁸. They belong to the late twelfth/

first half of the thirteenth century and show the same stylistic and iconographic tendencies (as best can be seen) that are found at Ascalon. The area of Saydnaya was never under Christian control in this period, but Christian presence – specifically Melkite – has always been strong there, and Mat Immerzeel hypothesizes contact with pilgrims and artists who had been travelling from Cyprus to the Holy Land. This program is striking because of the strong formal and linguistic affinities it has with the fathers at Ascalon and with examples in the Byzantine world. In that sense, then, borders meant little, and workshops trained in Byzantine styles evidently travelled in the Crusader kingdoms and in Muslim territory for Melkite patrons.

Other Eastern Christian programs share iconographic features, but less stylistic or formal kinship. The contemporary frescoes at Deir Mar Yakub at Qara (approximately 100 km north of Damascus; Melkite) shows a series of fathers (eight originally) inscribed in Greek and Syriac (Fig. 4)¹⁹. Formally, these frescoes are distinct from the Chapel of the Prophet Elijah and show affinities with frescoes also dating ca 1200 at Syrian Orthodox Deir Mar Musa²⁰. Those affinities reveal that style is not as consistent across the region as the iconography of the hierarchs, for a number are also found in the sanctuary at Mar Musa. The frescoes there have been ascribed to a 'Syrian style' because of greater emphasis on linearity and flatness of figures than one detects at Ascalon, for example. Also bilingual, like the monastery at Qara, Deir Mar Musa has a Byzantinizing format of a series of fathers arrayed in the lowest register of the apse (Pl. 14). Erica Cruikshank Dodd conjectured that the choice of Ignatius and James in that series was due to their significance for Miaphysites, but they are not found only in Syriac contexts²¹.

Given the appearance of the hierarchs in programs of churches connected with Melkites, Syrians and Byzantine Orthodox, a broad interpretation of their meanings may be appropriate. The hierarchs were pan-Christian, in fact, and could stand for the depth of community shared by Christians in their

¹⁵ On this issue, see Griffith 2008.

¹⁶ See Brooke 2006, 202-217; Folda 2008, 112-113; and Striker/Kuban 1997, 82-83, 138-140.

¹⁷ See Immerzeel 2007.

¹⁸ Immerzeel 2005, 173-176; *idem* 2009, 49-56.

¹⁹ Westphalen 2005, 108-110, 139-143.

²⁰ Westphalen 2007.

²¹ Cruikshank Dodd 2001, 44-46.

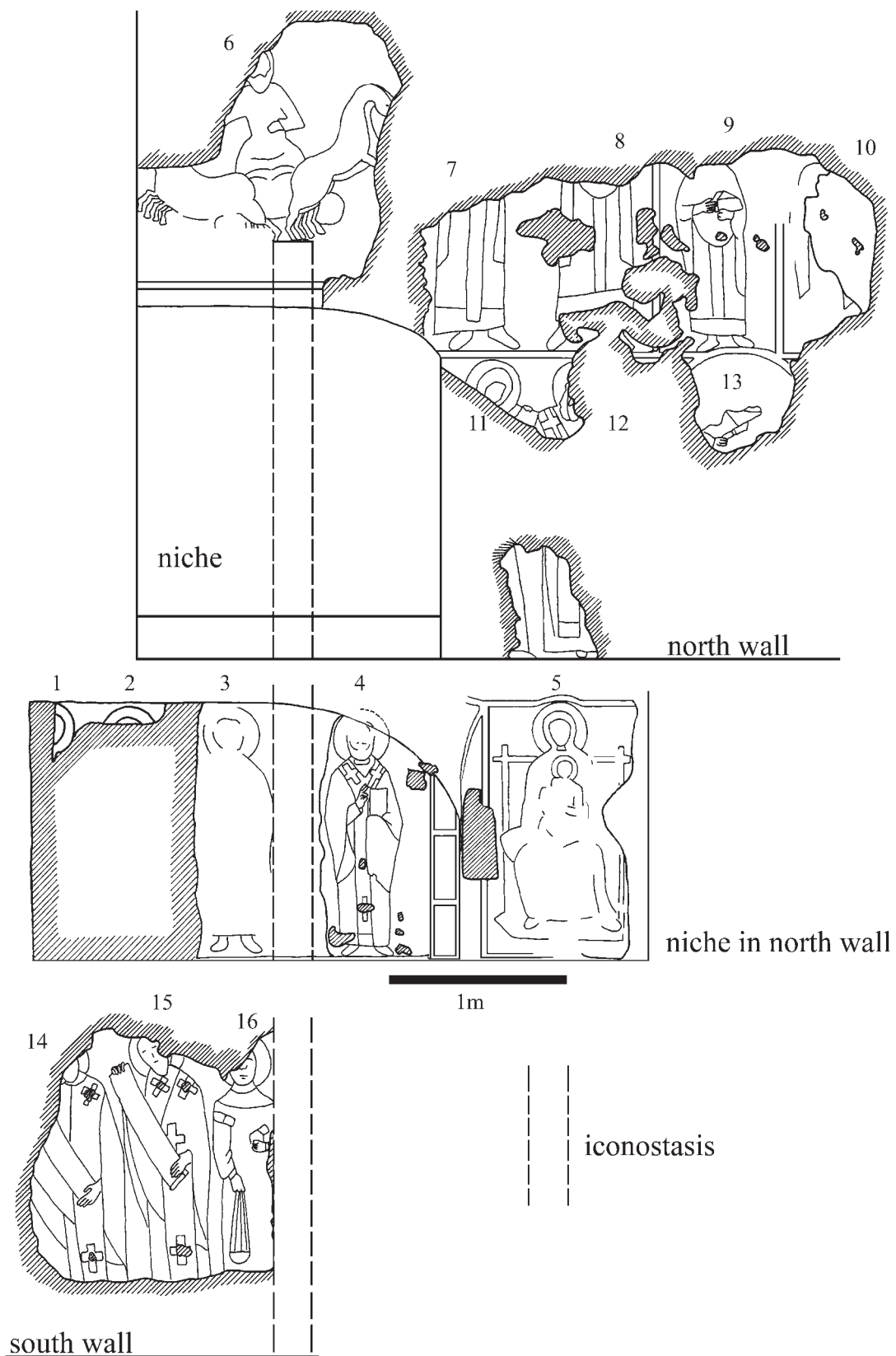


Fig. 3. Chapel of Mar Elias, Ma'arrat Saydnaya, Decorated elevations (source: Immerzeel 2009, Fig. 5)



Pl. 13. *Hierarchs, Chapel of the Prophet Elijah at Ma'arrat Saydnaya* (source: Mat Immerzeel)

common liturgical and theological histories. In those circumstances where strength of unity might appeal, such iconography may have had strong attraction²². This ecumenicalism may well have been a strong motivator in relations between Western Christians and Melkites, at least, in the Holy Land, and for that reason the iconography could also have indicated common purpose and history amongst the various Christian groups of the region²³. The common thread of Melkite patronage at Ascalon and at the Chapel of Elijah reveals a transnational quality to Melkite identity and to patronage of distinguishing style and iconography. The sideways progression of Greek-speaking hierarchs in those two churches show strong affinities to each other, and those features distinguish them from Qara and Mar Musa.

Yet a pragmatic approach to art and identity may be safest when examining such programs originating in different confessions and regions, but sharing important features²⁴. The holy rider is one such example, a saint known and revered by Muslims and Christians²⁵. But evidently church fathers fall into this category – at least as far as Christians went. And this openness should likely be understood as a primary motivation of choice of subject and style in artistic commissions. For instance, Wilbrand of Oldenburg described the construction and decoration of the palace of John of Ibelin in Beirut in 1211 as competitive commissions among artisans who were Greeks, Muslims and Syrians²⁶. The Syrian Orthodox Monastery of Mar Barsauma was said by Michael the Syrian (d. 1199) to have benefited in this period from the pilgrimage and work of people of all religions in the region in the building and the decoration of the monastery²⁷. Such cooperative ventures and wide interest can account, too, for the bilingual and multilingual nature of inscriptions in these churches. The Greek and Arabic in the Jerusalem Gate Church at Ascalon was due to the language-switching typical of Melkites, and that diglossia made these monuments accessible, on one level, to the widest spectrum of people in the region. Likewise, the Chapel of the Prophet Elijah has inscriptions in Greek with one later addition in Arabic; the Syrian Orthodox monastery of Mar Musa has inscriptions in Greek for names of saints and themes on the eleventh-century layer, in Arabic for all commemorative and dedicatory inscriptions, with later inscriptions in Syriac; and Latin and Greek was used at Abu Gosh – in every case, language was used according to choices made by the inscriber and context of the inscription²⁸.

²² See Westphalen 2007, 113. The fathers also carried the meaning in eleventh-/twelfth-century Byzantium of the righteous who rejoice in the Lord, and they may have provided that solace for Melkites and others in the twelfth-century Middle East. See Cutler 1980/1981.

²³ See the remarks of Hamilton 2009.

²⁴ See the forthcoming article by Immerzeel, Jeudy and Snelders, as well as the comments of Balard 2006, 149-167.

²⁵ For example, Immerzeel 2003; *idem* 2004; *idem* 2009, 145-156.

²⁶ Laurent 1873, 167.

²⁷ Chabot 1899-1924, III, 321; Honigman 1954, 48, 50; and Kawerau 1960, 102-106.

²⁸ See den Heijer/ter Haar Romeny/Immerzeel/Westphalen 2007, and examples given by Pringle 1982, 20 n. 62, and Sharon 1997-, IV, 8-9.

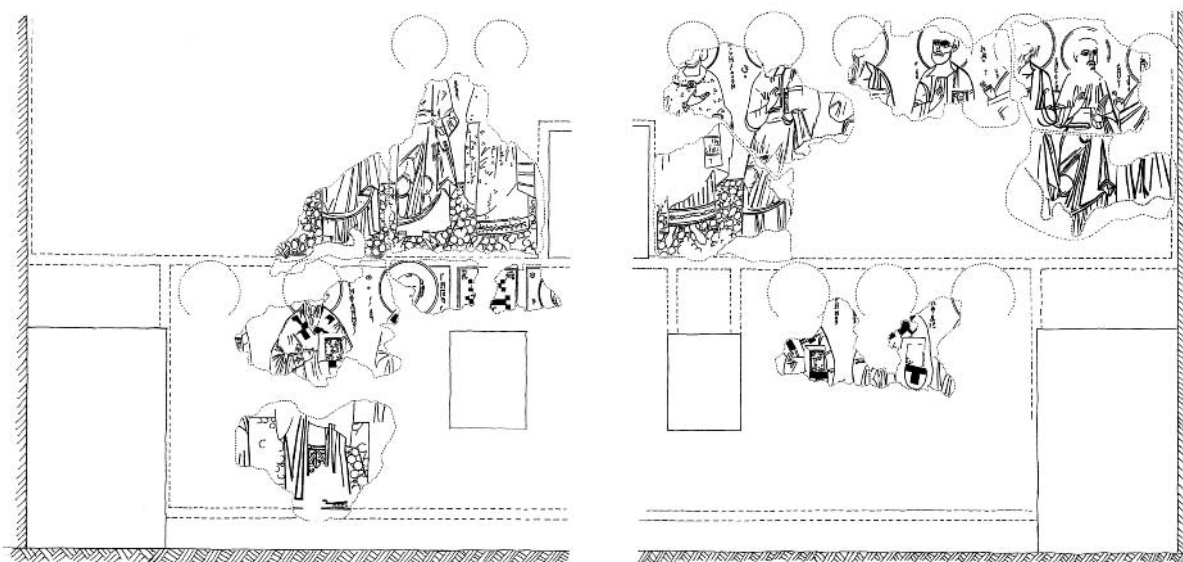


Fig. 4. Deir Mar Yakub, Qara, Hierarchs (source: Westphalen 2005, Abb. 26/27)



Pl. 14. Deir Mar Musa al-Habashi, Apse fresco of Hierarchs (source: Mat Immerzeel)

The Frankish rulers of Ascalon evidently felt tolerant about Arabic-speaking Christians in their new settlement, and they seem to have encouraged rebuilding of a church for them and may even have shared a Byzantine-trained workshop with the patrons of the program at Abu Gosh. Their attitude towards co-religionists appears open-minded, therefore, but evidence at Ascalon shows re-use of earlier Islamic material in a different light. Faith mattered more than language when establishing difference. The slab was found at the north end of Ascalon, near the Jaffa Gate where it was presumably set up (Pl. 15)²⁹. The original Arabic inscription is high quality, dated to the period immediately preceding the loss of the town to the Franks, that is 1150, and it describes the building of a tower at the behest of the Grand Vizier in Cairo. The slab was subsequently re-oriented and re-inscribed with non-verbal signs of the Crusaders in the form of French and English shields, which were painted red to bring them out forcefully from the foreign verbal field that now comprised a background. Arabic in this case was publicly supplanted. The Arabic as it survives in the church near the Jerusalem Gate was not readily visible, one assumes, because it was situated in the southern apse (Pls 6, 7). Yet it stood for the social language of co-religionists of the Franks, those Arabic-speaking, Chalcedonian-loyal Christians who were evidently allies of the Franks. Those Melkites were sufficiently trusted that they were given charge of restoring and redecorating a church in the newly Christianized town. Their Christianity, and not possible linguistic identifications through their Arabic speech, was the reason for their tolerance by Franks.

Borders in the modern sense applied less stringently than we might expect, in fact, and the movement of artists, let alone styles and iconography, and of other people was clearly possible. In that sense, borders were evidently permeable³⁰. Ascalon occupied an unusual place from the point of borders and spheres of influence. It was the object of a failed siege in 1099, but it remained in Muslim hands until 1153, and it was the originating point for raids on Frankish settlements and troops. But to see it as a hostile 'Gaza Strip' in the midst of a Crusader kingdom would be to overstate its discreteness and the effectiveness of the raids. In the first place, control of territory was apparently not cut and dry, and the influence Crusader rulers had in such territories could still be effected³¹. And



Pl. 15. Reworked Arabic inscription, Ashkelon
(source: Sharon 2008, 406, Fig. 22.2)

²⁹ Sharon 2008.

³⁰ The following is indebted to Ellenblum 1998 and 2007.

³¹ William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, 11, 12 (Huygens 1986, I, 514).

secondly, raids in the quarter century before the Crusader capture of Ascalon were increasingly ineffective³², and the threat from that town to Crusaders had diminished considerably³³. The town's strategic significance may have been overstated and part of failed Crusader policy for expansion that led to the kingdom's eventual demise. In any case, no evidence exists for the expulsion of Christians from Ascalon after the destruction of churches in the tenth century, and various Christian confessions certainly inhabited the town after 1153. The dissemination of cultural and artistic trends may have been possible in Ascalon for the entire twelfth century, for all that the archaeological record can tell us. During its Crusader period, it was clearly open to outside cultural influences, for the officiating hierarchs in the apse at the Jerusalem Gate Church show that the commission was fully current with top commissions in the Byzantine world, like Nerezi, and in the Eastern Christian world, like Mar Yakub and the Chapel of the Prophet Elijah.

From this point of view, MacEvitt's 'rough tolerance' appears even overstated, because the roughness is missing from what we know of Ascalon, at least with regard to Crusader treatment of co-religionists at that town. The Byzantinizing elements of the church by the Jerusalem Gate can likewise be overexplained; the alteration of the ground plan is like the layout of pre-Crusader churches and of Crusader churches in Jerusalem, like St Anne's, and ought not to be ascribed to allegiances to the empire based in Constantinople³⁴. The mosaics at Bethlehem can be seen as a kind of Cold War manipulation of culture for political ends, a stealthy infiltration behind enemy lines, like sending Louis Armstrong on tour in the communist bloc³⁵. But

Ronnie Ellenblum's model of 'spheres of varying degree of influence' can be usefully applied, because it allows overlapping agendas to co-exist and conflict, to be appropriately complex and not simply dichotomous³⁶. MacEvitt's argument that 'rough tolerance' operates through permeability and silence is highly useful, and it explains the transmission of styles and iconographies, while permitting individual and local interpretations. But the closest affiliation of churches with hierarchs are Nerezi (Byzantine territory), Ascalon (Crusader territory; Melkite) and the Chapel of Elijah (Muslim territory; Melkite). This network shows Melkite unity across Crusader and Muslim boundaries, and it reveals Byzantine style and iconography as a common language of confessional identity. In other words, evidence of what one can call a stylistic and an iconographic *lingua franca* that operated over various spheres of influence, while maintaining aspects of Melkite identity.

We cannot really know what the Christian communities were in Ascalon, except to say Melkites and Franks had churches there. The Melkites evidently had access to painters and builders who were current to practices in the eastern Mediterranean broadly speaking, and they chose elements that, evidently, mirrored liturgical and artistic practice in Byzantine churches. And Franks at Ascalon may have been active participants at that church; the model of Franks as disconnected exploiters, who did not really put down roots in Palestine, cannot be sustained. Perhaps the style of the hierarchs indicated the unity and deep roots of Christianity in the region, and Melkites played up that history in their own commissions. In any case, Byzantine art as a stylistic and iconographic *lingua franca* certainly travelled, and rough tolerance made that possible in the Crusader kingdoms and beyond. Tolerance and openness to those cultural forms allowed their dissemination throughout the region, and they make possible statements of contemporary unity and a shared past. The inscriptions, and figural and non-figural elements at the Jerusalem Gate Church – limited as they are – show clearly Frankish attitudes to Muslims and fellow Christians. Their fellow Christians followed the lead of the commission at Abu Gosh for Franks and at the Chapel of the Prophet Elijah for Melkites, in the choice of Byzantinizing forms that were inflected for local use and larger confessional self-identification. Those choices show, roughly, tolerance all round.

³² William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, 14, 22 (Huygens 1986, II, 659-660).

³³ Not to say that threats had not been pressing on Crusaders from Muslim forces in Ascalon, so see for example the episode narrated in a copyist's addendum to a manuscript of the chronicle of Guibert of Nogent (ca. 1055-1124). In 1112, Muslims of Ascalon attempted to trick Crusaders by sending apparently innocent merchants into the kingdom, but their treachery was uncovered, and the Crusaders were able to take their merchandise, capture the attackers and prevent the planned slaughter of Christians; See Huygens 1996, 355-360.

³⁴ Pringle 1982, 27-29.

³⁵ See Von Eschen 2004.

³⁶ See also the remarks in Kaldellis 2007, and Page 2008.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Babić, G., C. Walter 1976, 'The Inscriptions upon Liturgical Rolls in Byzantine Apse Decoration', *Révue des Études Byzantines* 34, 269-280.
- Balard, M. 2006, *Les Latins en Orient, XI^e-XV^e siècle*, Paris.
- Boiret, Y. 1998, 'La présence française dans les lieux saints en Israël', *Monumental* 22, 69-77.
- Bresc-Bautier, G. (ed.) 1984, *Le Cartulaire du Chapitre du Saint-Sépulchre de Jérusalem*, Paris (Documents relatifs à l'histoire des croisades 15).
- Brooke, R.B. 2006, *The Image of St. Francis: Responses to Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge.
- Chabot, J.B. (ed.) 1899-1924, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche jacobite d'Antioche*, 4 vols, Paris.
- Cruikshank Dodd, E. 2001, *The Frescoes of Mar Musa al-Habashi: A Study in Medieval Painting in Syria*, Toronto.
- Cutler, A. 1980/1981, 'Liturgical Strata in the Marginal Psalters', *DOP* 34, 17-30.
- Den Heijer, J., B. ter Haar Romeny, M. Immerzeel, S. Westphalen 2007, 'Deir Mar Musa: The Inscriptions', *ECA* 4, 133-185.
- Ellenblum, R. 1998, *Frankish Rural Settlement in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Cambridge.
- Ellenblum, R. 2007, *Crusader Castles and Modern Histories*, Cambridge.
- Folda, J. 1995, *The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land. 1098-1187*, Cambridge.
- Folda, J. 2008, *Crusader Art: The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, 1099-1291*, Aldershot.
- Gerstel, S.E.J. 1999, *Beholding the Sacred Mysteries: Programs of the Byzantine Sanctuary*, Seattle/London.
- Griffith, S.H. 2008, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*, Princeton.
- Hamilton, B. 2009, Review of MacEvitt 2008, *Times Literary Supplement* (23 January), 26.
- Honigman, E. 1954, *Le couvent de Barsauma et le patriarcat jacobite d'Antioche et de Syrie*, Louvain (CSCO, 146, Subsidia, 7).
- Huygens, R.B.C. (ed.) 1986, *Willelmi Tyrensis Archiepiscopi Chronicon*, 2 vols, Turnhout (Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 53-53A).
- Huygens, R.B.C. (ed.) 1996, *Guibert de Nogent, Dei gesta per francos et cinq autres textes*, Turnhout (Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 127A).
- Immerzeel, M. 2003, 'Divine Cavalry: Mounted Saints in Middle Eastern Christian Art', in: K. Ciggaar, H. Teule (eds), *East and West in the Crusader States. Context-Contacts-Confrontations, III: acta of the congress held at Hernen Castle in September 2000*, Leuven, 265-286 (OLA 125).
- Immerzeel, M. 2004, 'Holy Horsemen and Crusader Banners: Equestrian Saints in Wall Paintings in Lebanon and Syria', *ECA* 1, 29-60.
- Immerzeel, M. 2005, 'The Decoration of the Chapel of the Prophet Elijah in Ma'arrat Saydnaya', in: Schmidt/Westphalen (eds), 155-182 (SKCO 14).
- Immerzeel, M. 2007, 'Les pères de l'Eglise dans les peintures murales médiévales du Liban et de la Syrie', in: A. Schmidt, D. Gonnet (eds), *Les Pères grecs dans la tradition syriaque*, Paris, 185-193 (Etudes syriaques 4).
- Immerzeel, M. 2009, *Identity Puzzles. Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, Leuven (OLA 184).
- Immerzeel, M., A. Jeudy, B. Snelders, 'A Mixed Company of Syrians, Saracens and Greeks: Artistic Interaction in Middle Eastern Christian Art in the Middle Ages', in: *Proceedings of the Symposium 'Towards a Cultural History of Bilad-al-Sham in the Mamluk Era. Prosperity or Decline, Tolerance or Persecution? Balamand 3rd to 7th May 2005*, forthcoming.
- Kaldellis, A. 2007, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition*, Cambridge.
- Kawerau, P. 1960, *Die jakobitische Kirche im Zeitalter der syrischen Renaissance. Idee und Wirklichkeit*, 2nd ed., Berlin.
- Kratchkovsky, I., A. Vasiliev (eds) 1924-1932, 'Histoire de Yahya-ibn-Sa'id d'Antioche, continuateur de Sa'id-ibn-Bitriq', *PO* 18, 699-833; 23, 347-520.
- Kühnel, B. 1994, *Crusader Art of the Twelfth Century: A Geographical, an Historical, or an Art Historical Notion?*, Berlin.
- Kühnel, G. 1988, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Berlin.
- Kühnel, G. 1993/1994, 'Die Konzildarstellungen in der Geburtskirche in Bethlehem: Ihre kunsthistorische Tradition und ihr kirchenpolitisch-historischer Hintergrund', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 86/87, 86-107.
- Laurent, J.C.M. (ed.) 1873, *Peregrinatores medii aevi quattuor: Burchardus de Monte Sion, Ricoldus de Monte Crucis, Odoricus de Foro Julii, Wilbrandus de Oldenborg*, Leipzig.
- Le Strange, G. 1890/1965, *Palestine under the Muslims: A Description of Syria and the Holy Land from A.D. 650 to 1500. Translated from the Works of the Mediaeval Arabic Geographers*, London/Beirut.
- MacEvitt, C. 2008, *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*, Philadelphia.
- Page, G. 2008, *Being Byzantine: Greek Identity Before the Ottomans, 1200-1420*, Cambridge.
- Petersen, A. 2005, *The Towns of Palestine under Muslim Rule AD 600-1600*, Oxford (BAR International Series 1381).
- Pringle, D. 1982, 'Church-Building in Palestine before the Crusades', in: J. Folda (ed.), *Crusader Art in the Twelfth Century*, Oxford, 5-46.
- Pringle, D. 1993-2007, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Corpus*, 3 vols, Cambridge.
- Röhrich, R. (ed.) 1893, *Regesta Regni Hierosolymitani*, Innsbruck.
- Schick, R. 1995, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: A Historical and Archaeological Study*, Princeton.
- Schmidt, A., S. Westphalen (eds) 2005, *Christliche Wandmalereien in Syrien: Qara und das Kloster Mar Yakub*, Wiesbaden (SKCO 14).
- Sevcenko, N.P. 2006, 'Art and Liturgy in the Later Byzantine Empire', in: M. Angold (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity*. Vol. 5: *Eastern Christianity*, Cambridge, 127-153.
- Sevcenko, N.P. 2008, 'Art and the Liturgy', in: E. Jeffreys, J. Haldon, R. Cormack (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, Oxford, 731-740.
- Sharon, M. 1997-, *Corpus inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae*, 4 vols. to date, Leiden.

- Sharon, M. 2008, 'An Arabic Inscription Engraved with Crusader Shields', in: Stager/Schloen/Miller (eds), 405-426.
- Sinkević, I. 2000, *The Church of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi: Architecture, Programme, Patronage*, Wiesbaden.
- Stager, J., D. Schloen, D.M. Miller (eds) 2008, *Ashkelon 1: Overview and Summary, 1985-2006*, Winona Lake, IN (Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon 1).
- Striker, C.L., Y.D. Kuban (eds) 1997, *Kalenderhane in Istanbul: The Buildings, Their History, Architecture, and Decoration. Final reports on the Archaeological Exploration and Restoration at Kalenderhane Camii 1966-1978*, Mainz.
- Tzaferis, V., L.E. Stager 2008, 'The Church by the Jerusalem Gate', in: Stager/Schloen/Miller (eds), 399-403.
- Von Eschen, P.M. 2004, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*, Cambridge, MA.
- Westphalen, S. 2005, 'Das Kloster Mar Yakub und seine Wandmalereien', in: Schmidt/Westphalen (eds), 69-150.
- Westphalen, S. 2007, 'Deir Mar Musa: Die Malschichten 1-3', *ECA* 4, 99-126.

A Byzantine Cloisonné Triptych in the State Hermitage Museum: From the Monastery of Saydnaya to St Petersburg

Yuri PYATNITSKY

The State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg has in its collection a unique object of Byzantine art, the so-called Saydnaya Triptych (inv. no. w-1192). The triptych received its name after the Monastery of Saydnaya near Damascus, Syria, where it was kept for many years. In this article, the story behind the triptych's journey into the collection of the Hermitage is reconstructed.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SAYDNAYA TRIPTYCH

The object is a silver triptych reliquary with a hanging loop at the top. When closed the wings form the pattern of the four-armed cross in the centre (Pl. 1). Initially the cross was decorated with enamel insets or precious stones, leaving the mounts empty. In the background, embedded at the sides of the cross, are four silver plaques with small chased four-point crosses inside multi-petal medallions. With the wings opened, one can see the Deisis scene (Pl. 2). The central plaque depicts Christ enthroned, and the side wings have the fully depicted images of the Virgin (left wing) and St John the Forerunner (right wing; Pls 3-5). The images of Christ enthroned and St John the Forerunner, both made in cloisonné enamel on gold plaques, are set into the silver frame of the triptych. The left wing must have had a similar cloisonné image of the fully represented supplicating Virgin but it has been replaced by a silver chased plaque with the same image. All three decorated plaques (chased and enamelled) are set in frames with square mounts where once faceted cherry red and green glass paste had been. Some of these glass insets have remained intact, though most of them are missing. The central part is decorated at the top and bottom with rows consisting of three rectangles and four square mounts; all insets have disappeared. The rectangle mounts contain golden plaques of decorated cloisonné enamels. The square mounts probably held colour glass paste or precious stones, though there

could have been miniature gold insets with cloisonné enamel.

The back of the middle part is made of a sliding lid in the centre and a frame decorated with a double row of square mounts, four larger rectangles, and four smaller square mounts between them (Pls 6, 7). Some of the faceted dark blue and cherry red glass insets are preserved in the double row of mounts. The larger mounts were designed for the golden plaques with the decorated cloisonné enamels. In the middle part of the sliding lid there is now a silver chased plaque with the bust image of the Virgin with Child (Pls 8, 9). I suggest, however, that in its place there should have been a gold enamel plaque with the Crucifixion.

THE MONASTERY OF SAYDNAYA AND ITS CONTACTS WITH RUSSIA

According to tradition, the Greek Orthodox Monastery of Our Lady of the Nativity in Saydnaya, some 30 km north of Damascus, was founded in the sixth century during the reign of the Emperor Justinian. Legend has it that during a hunting trip Justinian followed a gazelle to find water. The gazelle then brought him to the spring where nature was full of life, and the trees and flowers were blossoming. Suddenly, an icon of the Virgin Mary appeared instead of the gazelle and a voice from heaven proclaimed that the Virgin wished a church to be built by the emperor at this spot. Later on she appeared to the emperor in a dream and showed him the plan of the church. In this way, the legend says, the Saydnaya Monastery was built; it would be a main pilgrimage centre in Syria and in the Near East in general, and still is one of the most important cultural and religious centres of Greek Orthodoxy¹.

¹ For the Monastery of Saydnaya and the cult of its icon see: Bacci 2006; Baraz 1995; Hamilton 2000; Immerzeel 2007; *idem* 2009, 43-49; Kedar 2001; Peeters 1906; Zayat 1932.



*Pl. 1. Saydnaya Triptych closed
(photograph: State Hermitage Museum)*



*Pl. 2. Saydnaya Triptych opened
(photograph: State Hermitage Museum)*

Pl. 3. Central panel:
cloisonné image of Christ Enthroned
(photograph: State Hermitage Museum)



Pl. 4. Left panel: silver plate with Virgin from the
Deisis (photograph: State Hermitage Museum)



Pl. 5. Right panel: cloisonné image of St John the
Baptist (photograph: State Hermitage Museum)



Pl. 6. Saydnaya Triptych, reverse closed (photograph: State Hermitage Museum)



Pl. 7. Saydnaya Triptych, reverse with opened panels: the Holy Cross (photograph: State Hermitage Museum)



*Pl. 8. Saydnaya Triptych, reverse:
central panel (photograph:
State Hermitage Museum)*



*Pl. 9. Detail of Pl. 8
(photograph: State Hermitage Museum)*

One of the main relics of the monastery is a miracle-working icon with the image of the Virgin and Child. According to the legend, this icon was painted by St Luke the Apostle. The icon is hidden from the believers in a special silver case which is kept in a separate niche behind the altar; no one can see it or touch it².

The relationship between Russia and this distant Syrian monastery has a long history, in spite of the fact that the Patriarchate of Antioch made official contacts with Moscow as late as in the mid-sixteenth century, as the last of the patriarchates of Greek Orthodoxy³. In January 1558 monks of St Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai came to Moscow with official letters from Joachim, the Patriarch of Alexandria, and Macarius, the Archbishop of Sinai, and they told the Moscow administration about the difficult situation of the Patriarchate of Antioch⁴.

As a result, in September 1558, Ivan the Terrible sent generous financial contributions to the Oriental Greek Orthodox Church to the Patriarch of Antioch, Joachim IV (Ibn Juma, 1543/44-1576) through the merchant Vasilii Pozdnyakov, amongst others. During his mission, Pozdnyakov visited the four Greek Orthodox patriarchs (of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria). He came to Damascus in the spring (as suggested by Khrisanf Loparev)⁵ or the summer (as suggested by K.A. Panchenko)⁶ of 1560 and delivered the alms to the Patriarch of Antioch. In return, Joachim IV sent Pozdnyakov back with a letter that confirmed the receipt of the alms, and sent some information about the Patriarchate of Antioch. This document includes several interesting facts about the Monastery of Saydnaya:

O Holy Tsar, there is a monastery in our land, beyond the city of Damascus, that is devoted to Our Lady. Over forty monks live there and they do not have any fortune. People say that St Paul the Apostle visited the place. The miracle-working icon of the Virgin Mary painted by St Luke the Evangelist is still here and the chrism runs from both hands of the Virgin Mary, and this icon cures everyone who comes to it with faith. In order to be remembered in this monastery, if you wish so, send them alms, and may God bless you with it⁷.

In March 1582, Trifon Korobeinikov and Yury Grekov were sent from Moscow to the Orthodox Orient, travelling through Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and the Holy City of Jerusalem, to Mount Sinai and to Egypt with rich alms from Ivan the Terrible. Describing the road from Constantinople to Jerusalem, Korobeinikov mentions the Monastery of Saydnaya:

The Greek Monastery of Our Lady is located 10 versts⁸ before Damascus; and there is the miracle-working icon of the Virgin that cured the hand of John of Damascus which the iconoclast King Leo III had ordered to be cleft in Damascus. Even today the chrism runs from this icon that has the size of a palm⁹.

In 1593, on the occasion of the establishment of the Patriarchate in Moscow alms were sent to the Greek Orthodox with Michael Ogarkov and Trifon Korobeinikov. The 910 gold coins and forty sables

² Peeters 1906, 137-155; Tsitsiloni/Mols 1999, 49-52.

³ Panchenko 2004, 203-221.

⁴ Murav'ev 1858, 88-94.

⁵ Loparev in Choždenie kupca Vasilii Pozdnyakova 1887, V-VI.

⁶ Panchenko 2004, 204-205.

⁷ 'Святейший царь, здесь в наших странах обретаеца монастырь за градом Дамаску (...). Пречистые Преподобные Богородицы. И обретаются в нем четьредесят братов и свыше. Прочее же лишени суть всякого блага. Места мо пребывал святой Павел. Тамо и ныне есть [икона] святые Богородицы, ю ж написал Лука Евангелист, от нея ж суть из двою руцы тьи миро течет, и множивами бывает исцеление приходящим к ней с верою. И для ради вашей памяти пошли им милостыню, яко ж благоволишь, и наставит тя Бог.' (after Panchenko 2004, 205). A passage from the text of this letter was published for the first time by A.N. Murav'ev in his narration: 'St Paul the Apostle stayed there once and there is still the icon of the Virgin Mary painted by Luke the Evangelist. Chrism runs out from both her hands and those with faith were often healed' ('Там пребывал некогда святой Апостол Павел, там и донныне есть образ Пресвятыя Богородицы, который написал евангелист Лука. Из обеих рук ея течет миро и многие бывают исцеления приходящим с верою'; Murav'ev 1858, 103). The original letter by Joachim IV is kept in RGADA, found 52, opis' 1, kniga 1, listi 169-173 ob.

⁸ Versta: 1.0668 kilometers in the second half of the nineteenth – beginning of the twentieth century in Russia.

⁹ 'И не доходя до Дамаска десять верст, стоит монастырь греческой Пречистыя Богородицы, а в том монастыре образ чудотворной, что исцелила Ивана Дамаскина руку, что ему отсек злочестивый царь Лев иконоборец в Дамаске, и от того Пречистыя образа исходит миро, и до сего дни, а образ пядница.' (Leonid, Archimandrite 1871, 32).

for the Patriarchate of Antioch were accepted by the Aleppine Bishop Macarius in 1593, who at that time was in Constantinople. Part of this gift were '120 coins meant for the Convent of the Virgin, where 60 nuns lived'¹⁰. In 1654, the Patriarch of Antioch, Macarius came to Moscow with a request for alms¹¹. The patriarch was accompanied by his son, Archdeacon Paul of Aleppo, who left a detailed description of this journey. Before leaving Moscow, Tsar Alexey Mikhailovich gave Patriarch Macarius several chrysobuls, i.e. letters with gold seals attached to them:

The first chrysobul is for the Patriarch of Antioch, allowing him to come to Russia every three years for alms. Among the mission's members could be the archimandrite or the bishop with two or three monks and servants. The amount of alms would be according to the Russian Tsar's decision following the will of God. The mission should leave Russia after having received the alms. The second chrysobul is meant to be given to the Balamand Monastery in Tripoli, the third chrysobul is given to the St George Monastery called Humarah, and the fourth one is for the Saydnaya Monastery¹².

The Russian pilgrim Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky, who visited the Monastery of Saydnaya in September-October 1728, described the monastery in great detail¹³. He made a splendid drawing of the monastery and its vicinity that is reproduced here (Fig. 1; see also the Appendix). The description mentions several very interesting facts. Grigorovich-Barsky writes that initially it was a monastery for men but after the oppressed coenobites deserted it the monastery was occupied by nuns. Saydnaya was a very popular place for pilgrimage thanks to the icon of Our Lady kept in the monastery. He describes it as follows:

There is the special miracle-working icon of the Virgin [in the monastery – Y.P.]; the icon is small and is kept in a marble case that is placed in the altar room where there is the synthronon, and a silver railing surrounds the case. No one can open the case and see this miraculous icon. Fear of the invisible Holy Power prevents it, for many attempted to do so but in vain. People say that the icon was painted by St Luke the Evangelist himself. There is a story about how and when the icon came

to the monastery: a monk from Anatolia made a long and painful pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem. Being in Jerusalem he prayed at the holy places and stayed for some time in the city. On his way back he took with him an icon that had been in a church, and it is not known with certainty whether he bought this icon or if it was given to him, or if he took it secretly. But, according to many witnesses, he carried the icon to the Saydnaya Monastery and rested there for several days before resuming his journey.

When the monk finally left the monastery, he travelled the whole day, and at night found himself back in front of the monastery's gate. The same story happened to him the second and the third day, and then he realized that the icon of the Virgin preferred the monastery and wished to stay here:

The monks accepted the icon as a precious gift and ceremonially placed it in the church at an honourable place for the glorification of the miracle. When the Agarians [Muslims – Y.P.] and Ethiopians launched the persecution of Christians, a monk hid the icon in a small stone case. When the monks returned to the monastery and tried to take the icon from the case to put it in a visible place, no one could open the case and see the icon, because the invisible Holy Power did not allow it. And from there, the icon in the closed case was placed above the synthronon in the altar room where it was guarded by silver railing. And no one dares to open the case, but one can worship the icon. This icon performs many miracles and receives many gifts from the pilgrims. There are there many gold,

¹⁰ Choždenie Trifona Korobeinikova 1889, 103 ('в девичий монастырь Пречистой Богородицы 60 старицам – 120 золотых'); Panchenko 2004, 208-210.

¹¹ Bantish-Kamensky 2001, 118.

¹² 'Первый хрисовул – для Апостольской Антиохийской Церкви, чтобы каждые три года приезжал архимандрит или архиерей с двумя-тремя монахами и слугами за царской милостыней, сколько Бог положит царю на душу, после чего они удаляются; другой хрисовул – для монастыря Белемед в Триполи; третий – для монастыря святого Георгия Хмерэ; четвертый – для Сайданайского монастыря' (Paul of Aleppo 2005, 518).

¹³ Grigorovich-Barsky 1886, 100-108. For the travels of Grigorovich-Barsky, see Grishin 2006.

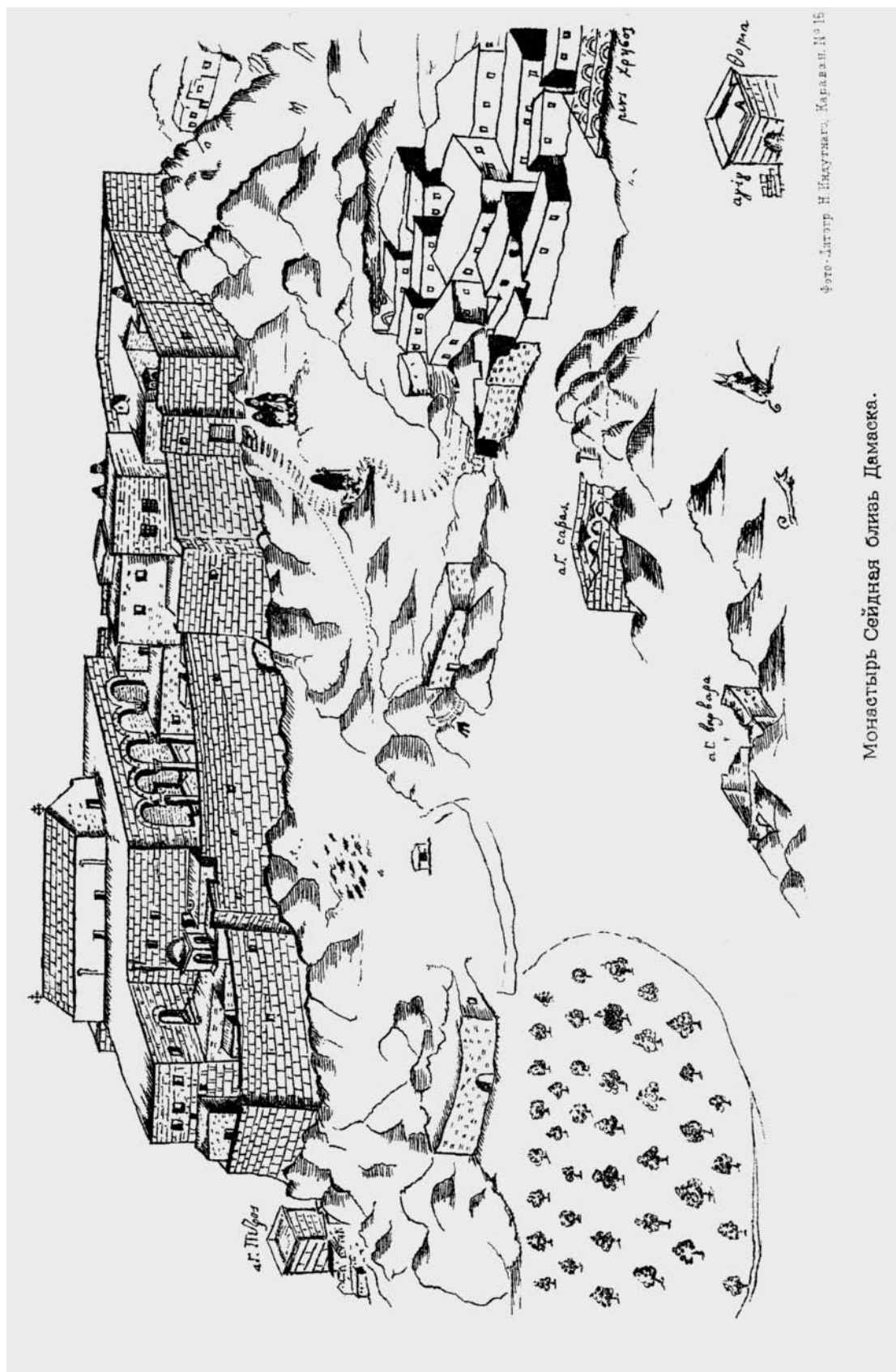


Fig. 1. The Monastery of Saydnaya in 1728; drawing in the book by Grigorovich-Barsky (Vol. II, 100-101)

silver, and pearl crosses and pendants with various precious stones, but especially censers, made of silver and rock crystal, there are about a hundred of them, small and big, and many of them are gilded, and all were donated by pilgrims for the miracles performed by the icon¹⁴.

Among these precious gifts of chains, crosses, small icons, and enkolpia could have been the Byzantine triptych now kept in the Hermitage Museum, which is discussed in this article.

The famous Russian scholar and traveller, Archimandrite Porfiriy Uspensky (Pl. 10) wrote the following about the Monastery of Saydnaya in his diaries that were published by the Imperial Academy of Science under the title *The Book of My Life*:

The church of the monastery is a rather big but dark place. The main altar is devoted to the feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos. The side chapel to the right is devoted to St Nicholas the Miracle Maker and behind it, in a corner, is the dark chapel devoted to St Demetrius. On the left side there is a chapel of the Council of Archangels, and the altar table where once stood the Syrian Jacobites from Homs, Hama and other places to celebrate the Liturgy. But the Patriarch Methodius [the Patriarch of Antioch, 1823-1850 – Y.P.] destroyed it. The church is divided into three parts by columns. It is very dirty in the church (...). In the altar room, in front of the altar table and behind it, the floor is paved with mosaics from stones of different colours. It is decorated with animals in rectangles. A special small chapel is made behind the altar, where the icon of St Luke is kept. Its walls and floor are decorated with tiles and marble mosaics. The icon itself is impossible to see, since it is locked in an oblong iron arc. The Uniates believe and propagate that the real icon of St Luke was taken from the monastery a long time ago and no one knows where it is, and only a copy of it is saved here. The arc is placed in the wall's niche behind the silver railing. Also behind the railing are many different small crosses and icons of the Virgin of good quality and in silver settings with precious stones. Many icon-lamps burn in this chapel and a table is placed in the centre of it, and on the table stands a big glass vessel with burning balm (...). Fifteen large silver icon-lamps of good quality are hanging in a half-circle in front of the iconostasis, and before them there are five big glass lamps, two

of them made of clear porcelain; and there is one bigger silver lamp with four smaller ones attached to it. In the centre of the chapel there is a stone pole with a big glass lamp and an eternal flame; on both sides of the pole stand two big candle-holders with large wax candles and two smaller candle-holders with appropriately sized candles. In the niche where the icon of St Luke is kept in a stone case covered with cloth, a silver railing has been erected. The niche is closed by silver doors with holy images chased on them. The crosses, icons, and pendants hang behind the railing (...). Above the silver doors hang various brocaded screens of fine work. On one of them I noticed sewn small

¹⁴ 'Обретається бо в нем зело чудотворная икона Пресвятия Богородицы, зело мала, и та затворенна в киотце мраморном и поставлена создаи олтаря великаго на месте, идеже прежде бяхе горнее седалище, и затворенна есть кратною сребряною, и никто же может отверзти и узрети ю очима, понеже некий страх и невидимая сила не допускает, якоже мнози покусишася и тщи отъидоша. Повествуют же в народе, яко та икона есть от рукоделий с[вятого] евангелиста Луки. Како же и откуда тамо обретется, слыши сице: некий инок от Анатолии, издалече шествие творяше, поклонения ради, ко с[вятому] граду Иерусалиму; дошедши же, поклонися местом святым и замедли тамо некое время; последи же возвращающися, поять с собою купно ону икону, яже прежде бяхе в Иерусалиме, в едином храме, и неизвестно, или купи ю, или дарована ему бистъ, или тайно взят. Се точно достоверно повествуют мнози, яко возвращающися с иконою, по случаю прииде в монастырь Сеидная гостити, и замедливши мали дни, хотяше отйти в путь свой » (...) 'Иноци же, иже в монастыре прияха икону, аки дар многоценен, и поставиши ю с многою честию на месте избранном в храме, иже чудеси бистъ прославляема; последи жегонению бившу на христиани от Агарян и Ефиопов, некто от инок сокри икону ту в мал киотец каменен. Последи же паки собравшимся иноком в монастырь, хотяху ю взяти от киота и поставити на месте явном, но никто же можаше отверсти или видети ю, понеже некая невидимая Божественная сила не оставляше. От того убо часа поставиша ю сице затворенну сзади олтаря на горнем седалищи и заградиша ю крати сребряными, да никто же касается отверзти киот, но да творит поклонение вне, якоже и ныне обретається. Много же чудес творит и многи дари имать от поклонник приходящих. Тамо ланцухов златих, сребряних, маргаритних, крестов и канаков многоценних, с различными драгими камени, особно же кандил сребних, кроме христианних, малых же и великих, обретаются сто, от них же многи суть позлащенни, та вся ради чудес биваемых поклонники от говения своего дарствоваша' (Grigorovich-Barsky 1886, 106-107).

silver square plaques and bigger plaques shaped as flowers. The whole floor in the chapel is made of

*multi-coloured marble consisting of small stones and finely made work. The same mosaic decorates the wall beneath the niche (...)*¹⁵.

¹⁵ 'Церковь темна, но довольно велика. Главный престол во имя Рождества Богородицы. По правую руку небольшой придел во имя Святого Николая, за ним придел Святого Димитрия, в углу темный. По левую руку придел во имя архангелов; за ним был престол, на котором служили сириане-яковиты из Хомса, Хам и пр[очих мест] (а не здешние); но патриарх Мефодий уничтожил его. Церковь колоннами направо и налево разделяется на три части. В церкви очень не чисто. (...) В алтаре пред и за престолом пол покрыт мозаикою из разноцветных камней. В четвероугольниках выделаны изображения животных. За алтарем устроена особая молельня и украшена довольно хорошо кафлями и мраморную мозаикою по стене и полу, где находится икона евангелиста Луки. Не видно этой иконы. Она скрыта в железном ковчеге продолговатом. Униаты говорят и проповедывают в церквах, что икона евангелиста Луки настоящая давно унесена куда-то из монастыря, и что тут только хранится копия. Ковчег стоит в углублении стены за серебряною решеткою. Тут есть за решеткою разные небольшие кресты и иконы Божией Матери хорошей работы и в серебряных окладах с камнями. В молельне горит много лампад; посреди стоит стол, на нем большой стеклянный сосуд с елеем горящим. (...) В молельне висит по иконостасу в полуциркле 15 серебряных больших лампад хорошей работы; пред ними 5 лампад больших стеклянных, из них две фарфоровые, тонкие прозрачные; среди них одна большая лампада серебряная с 4 малыми, висящими на ней, прикрепленными к ней; среди молельни стоит столб каменный; на нем большая стеклянная лампада с неугасимым огнем, по бокам его два подсвечника с большими свечами восковыми росписными и два малых с такими же свечами. В окне, где хранится в каменном ковчеге под покровом икона святого Луки, сделана серебряная решетка; окно закрывается створчатыми серебряными полотнищами чеканной работы с изображениями священными. За решеткою висят кресты, иконы, привески; (...) Над створом висят разные завесы небольшие изрядные; на одной я заметил кованные серебряные бляхи маленькие в виде квадратов большие в виде цветов. Весь пол в молельне из разноцветного мрамора, штучный, мелкотравчатый, равно и стенка под окном из таковой же мозаики' (Uspensky 1894, 227-246).

¹⁶ 'Женский монастырь Рождества Богородицы, именуемый Сайданая, в 6 часах расстояния на север от Дамаска. Это древнейшая обитель в Сирии. Она построена благоверным царем Юстинианом I в VI веке. Местоположение её весьма живописно. Обитель занимает и, так сказать, венчает самое темя высокого и голого холма. (...) Кругом обители на окрестных пригорках и возвышенностях разсеяны развалины 8 храмов и уцелели три церкви и один монастырек. В Сайданайском монастыре церковь не мала, но темна и скудна: требует перестройки верхней части.

In his official 'Report on the Greek Orthodox Church in Syria presented 15 January 1847 to Count N.A. Protasov, the Oberprokuror (imperial high commissioner) of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church', Archimandrite Porfiriy Uspensky describes the monastery as follows:

*The Convent of Our Lady called Saydnaya is located at a 6 hours' ride to the north of Damascus. It is the oldest monastery in Syria and was built by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian in the sixth century. The position of the monastery is very picturesque, since it is situated on, or rather crowns, the top of a high and steep hill. (...) The ruins of eight churches, three of which have been preserved, and one small monastery lie on the hills and rocks around the monastery. There is a big but dark and poor church in the Saydnaya Monastery; the upper part of it requires remodeling. Behind the main altar there is a small chapel and in the chapel is the miracle-working icon of the Virgin painted by Luke the Evangelist. The icon is hidden in the wall and no one can see it. 80 cells and guest chambers are set up around the church and on the west side of the monastery. Altogether 38 nuns live in the monastery. The future nuns here come from the dioceses of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. They are placed in the monastery by the patriarch upon recommendation of local bishops. Women abstain from 'temptation' from one to three years, and after that they cut their hair and devote it to the Virgin; after this ceremony they stay in their cells for three days and do not even go to church. The nuns' dress consists of a simple blue shirt and a black frock, and they cover their head with a long black scarf, in a way that their face, except their eyes, cannot be seen. The Saydnaya nuns lead a strict life and keep fast (...). The monastery exists on the charity of the pilgrims, mainly Christians, who come here from different places to pray to the miracle-working icon of the Virgin. They bring with them sick people to be healed, and who often are healed by the will of Our Lady. Many people come here at Easter time and on 8 September (...). The Saydnaya Monastery enjoys the honour and respect of all Christians living in Syria*¹⁶.

In the same year, i.e. 1847, Archimandrite Porfiriy launched a fundraising campaign to purchase a garden with olive trees for the Saydnaya Convent. Thanks to the personal participation of Empress Alexandra Fedorovna, the campaign was a success. In his diary, *Book of my Life*, he wrote on 19 May 1847:

My voice for help for the Saydnaya Convent (...) was heard in the palace of Empress Alexandra Fedorovna and in the houses of devout women in the cities of St Petersburg and Odessa. Tsetsilia Vladislavovna Fredericks, an Empress' confidant, presented her with my brief report describing the convent, and she aided it through the purchase of olive trees near Beirut and Tripoli. Here is the text of this report: 'Within the Orthodox Syrian church controlled by the Patriarch of Antioch, 30 versts to the north from Damascus, there is an Arabic convent devoted to the Nativity and called 'Saydnaya', meaning 'Our Lady'. The convent was built by Justinian I and during thirteen centuries served as a stronghold of Orthodoxy in long-suffering Syria. This old convent was located on top of a high hill (...). Behind the outer walls it is divided into two halves by another wall, where one half is meant for the nuns occupying 40 rooms, and the other half has a church and 40 rooms for the guests-pilgrims. 38 Nuns live in the convent under the guidance of the Mother Superior [abbess – Y.P.] Catherina (...). The nuns receive bread, Saracen millet, tree oil [olive oil of the lowest quality – Y.P.], coal, cotton, paper and wool from the convent; they themselves prepare their own meal, cloth, and shoes. Their ascetic life is spent with prayers and repentance, and working caring for ill people. Their faith and devotion to the will of God is as firm as the rock on which the convent is built; their humbleness is ingenuous; their suffering is enormous. The old nuns receive communion every Saturday and the younger ones once a month (...). There are two literate nuns who teach Arabic reading and writing to several gifted sisters and girls from the neighbouring village of Saydnaya, where also live Orthodox and Uniates. The Syrian Christians, especially women, come to the convent from many villages and towns to pray to Our Lady and bring with them sick people to be cured by the miraculous icon of Our Lady (...). The Saydnaya Convent exists thanks to voluntary donations of pilgrims. The convent has some property:

a house in Damascus that gives 115 silver rubles in net profit per year; there I saw a small vineyard, a vegetable garden, a lot of plough land, and 150 goats. However, the convent has to share with outsiders its income from all these. Near the convent, in the village of Saydnaya, resides a poor archbishop from Seleucia with six priests permanently. They perform public services and religious rites for the nuns and the convent supports them. Pilgrims donate to the convent cloth and money but traditionally do not pay for meals during their stay.

The Saydnaya nuns tearfully ask for help from the Russian Orthodox, namely to purchase for them an olive garden with 1000 trees in the vicinity of Beirut or Tripoli. This garden will cost 5000 rubles, (...) with the income from it, the nuns would renew and decorate their poverty-stricken church, and maintain the convent and school for girls in it. Hear their meek petition, give them and through them, consolation, encouragement, and help to all Orthodox in Syria (...). This petition was handed at the right moment to the Empress. She sent me 200 silver rubles on 9 of September, [1847] and Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna 150 rubles. I myself and the monks accompanying me, Feofan, Petr Soloviev, and Nikolay Krylov, donated 35 rubles. The total amount came to 385 rubles which, on 13 November, I gave to Alexander Sturdza in Odessa and adding to them 10 rubles and 30 kopeks begged from Mrs Nikitina

За главным алтарем устроена небольшая молеельня, в которой находится чудотворный образ Богоматери кисти святого Луки, впрочем скрытый в стене и никем не видимый. По сторонам церкви и к западу устроено 80 келий и гостиничных комнат. Всех монахинь 38. Они приходят сюда из всех епархий и определяются патриархом по рекомендации архиереев. По выдержании искуса от одного до 3 лет, они постригаются и посвящают волосы Преподобной Деве Марии, а после этого обряда трое суток не выходят из келий даже в церковь. Одежда их состоит из обыкновенной синей рубахи и черной рясы; а голова покрывается черным длинным платком, так что лица кроме глаз не видно. Сайданайские монахини ведут жизнь строгую и постную (...). Обитель содержится добровольными подаяниями поклонников, наипаче христианок, которые из многих мест приходят сюда молиться чудотворной [иконе] Богоматери и приводят больных для целения, обильно подаваемого небесною Владычицею. Большое стечение народа бывает во время Пасхи и 8 сентября. (...) Сайданайская обитель отменно уважается всеми христианами Сирии' (Uspensky 1910, 178-181).

¹⁷ 'А мой голос о помощи Сайданайскому женскому монастырю, что близ Дамаска, был услышан в цертоге императрицы Александры Федоровны и в термах жен благочестивых в Петербурге и Одессе. Наперсница Ея Величества Цецилия Владиславовна Фредерикс, недавно принявшая православие, представила ей мою краткою записку о семмонастыре и о вспоможении ему покупкою масличных дерев около Бейрута или Триполи. Вот эта записка! 'В пределах православной церкви Сирийской, управляемой Антиохийским патриархом, в 30 верстах к северу от Дамаска, на север, находится арабский женский монастырь во имя Рождества Богоматери, называемый Сайданая, что значит Владычица. Он построен благоверным царем Юстинианом I и в течениитринадцати веков служил оплотом Православия в многострадальной Сирии. Эта древняя обитель стоит на конусной вершине высокого, скалистого холма у восточного погорья Антиливана. Внутри ограды она разделена стеною на две половины, из коих в одной помещаются монахини в 40 келлиях, а в другой находится церковь и 40 гостиничных комнат для богомольцев. Тридцать восемь монахинь и послушниц живут там под руководством благоразумной и благочестивой игуменьи Екатерины. Одежда их состоит из синей рубахи и черной рясы, а головы обвязываются и покрываются черными платками так, что лиц, кроме глаз, не видать. Монахини получают от монастыря хлеб, сарачинское пшено, деревянное масло [худший сорт оливкового масла – П.Ю.], угли, хлопчатую бумагу и шерсть, и сами себе готовят пищу, одежду и обувь. Суровая жизнь их проходит в подвигах молитвы и покаяния, в труде и служении больным. Вера и преданность их воле Божией тверда, как та скала, на которой сооружен их монастырь; смирение их простосердечно; терпение их велико. Старые монахини причащаются святых таин в каждую субботу, а молодые однажды в месяц. Из обители своей они выходят только тогда, когда сносят на раменах своих какую-либо усопшую сестру в подгорную усыпальницу. В Сайданайском монастыре есть две грамотные монахини, и они обучают чтению и письму арабскому некоторых способных послушниц и девочек из соседней деревни Сайданая, в которой православные живут вместе с униатами. Из многих деревень и городов сирийские христиане и особенно женщины, приходят в сей монастырь молиться Богоматери и приводят с собою больных для целения, обильно подаваемого небесною царицею. Умилительно видеть сайданайских монахинь, безмолвно по ночам молящихся вместе с христианками и ухаживающих за больными, которых приносят в церковь и полагают пред чудотворною иконою Пресвятой Девы. Сайданайский монастырь содержится добровольными подаяниями поклонников. А имения его весьма скудны: есть в Дамаске дом, который приносит чистого дохода 115 рублей серебром в год; есть небольшой виноградник, овощной огород, кусок пахотной земли и 150 коз. Но и этими малыми прибытками монастырь делится с посторонними. Бедный архиепископ Селевкийский, имеющий свое пребывание в деревне Сайданая, и при

in Odessa. Sturdza himself gave 150 rubles and collected 188 rubles from other persons and all the money (733 rubles) was sent to Russian ambassador [Vladimir] Titov in Istanbul.

At the end, the Russian money was exchanged for Ottoman piasters and sent to Konstantine Basili, the Russian Consul in Beirut. With his assistance the convent acquired two gardens with olive trees, dates, and other sorts of trees, and a vineyard in the village of Bturrarn near Tripoli. The rest of the money, to which the convent added its own, went into the purchase of a third garden near the monastery. The purchase of these gardens was of great importance for maintaining the relative welfare of the convent. Russian aid continued to arrive during the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century¹⁷.

немб-тсв священников, пользуются крупницами монастырскими за отправление богослужения и церковных треб для монахинь. А поклонники хоть и жертвуют деньги и вещи, но по обычаю питаются уже от монастыря во все время богомолья своего. Сайданайские монахини со слезами и биением в перси просят у христианской любви православных россиян единственного пособия, именно, покупки готового масличного сада в 1000 дерев, в окрестностях Бейрута или Триполи. Этот сад будет стоить 5000 рублей. Когда пожертвуются им эта сумма, тогда они озаботятся приисканием такого сада подле упомянутых городов и купят его, а доходами с него обновят и украсят свою убогую церковь и будут поддерживать свой бедный монастырь и училище в нем. Да услышано будет их смиренное прошение, и да подастся им и чрез них всем православным в Сирии утешение, ободрение и помощь в настоящее время, когда Запад разослал по всему Востоку сестер Св. Иосифа для проповеди римских догматов православным христианам». В добрый час эта записка представлена была императрице. Она 9 сентября [1847 года] прислала мне 200 рублей серебром, а великая княгиня Мария Николаевна 150 рублей. Да сам я и состоявшие при мне иеромонах Феофан, Петр Соловьев и Николай Крылов пожертвовали 35 рублей. Итого 385 рублей. Эти деньги я 13/20 ноября я передал в Одессе Александру Скарлатовичу Стурдзе для возможного большого приращения их стараниями его, присовокупив к ним 10 рублей 30 копеек, выпрошенных мною в Одессе у госпожи Никитиной. Стурдза пожертвовал 150 рублей, да от разных лиц собрал 188 рублей и все эти деньги в количестве 733 рублей переслал в Константинопольнашему посланнику [Владимиру] Титову, а он препроводил их ко мне при своем отношении от 15 февраля 1849 года; я же обменял их на турецкие пиастры в количестве 12 000 и отослал к нашему генеральному консулу [Константину] Базили в Бейрут. На эти пиастры куплены



Pl. 10. Lithography portrait of Archbishop Porfiry Uspensky, 1840s

THE HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF THE SAYDNAYA TRIPTYCH BY RUSSIAN SCHOLARS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

At the beginning of the twentieth century, two of Russia's most prominent Byzantinists, Fedor Ivanovich Uspensky and Nikodim Pavlovich Kondakov, independently from each other introduced scholars to the Byzantine cloisonné triptych kept in the Monastery of Saydnaya (Pls 11, 12). They described and attributed it, illustrating their study with photographs (Pl. 13).

In 1900, the Russian Archaeological Institute in Constantinople, with help of the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society, organized an archaeological expedition to Syria. The members of the expedition included the Byzantinist Fedor Uspensky, director of the Institute, the artist Nikolay Kluge, the photographer Nadezhda Uspenskaya (Uspensky's wife), and Jacob Churi, a dragoman (guide-translator) of the Russian consulate in Jerusalem. One of the places visited by the expedition was the Greek

Orthodox Monastery in Saydnaya dedicated to Our Lady (ἡ μονή της Παναγίας Σεγδενάιας, as Uspensky wrote). Uspensky noticed several Byzantine objects in the monastery's treasury; the cloisonné triptych was the most unique among them. In the published expedition's report he gave a detailed description of the front side of the triptych and reproduced a fine photograph of it in its actual size¹⁸. Uspensky considered the enamel plaques with the images of St John the Forerunner and Christ Enthroned as the best examples of Byzantine cloisonné enamels and dated them to the tenth-eleventh century. Uspensky made an important observation regarding the chased plaque with the image of the Virgin in the Deisis scene. He wrote that 'the plaque with the image of the Virgin by both its technique and material points to a later date and was made by a different craftsman and in a different period than that with the cloisonné'. He also noted that 'the front side of the triptych represents the cross with a medallion and four holes at the ends'¹⁹. Judging from the latter remark and the photograph, Uspensky had the opportunity to examine the triptych in detail. Nevertheless he did not give a description of the back side with the chased image of the Virgin and Child²⁰.

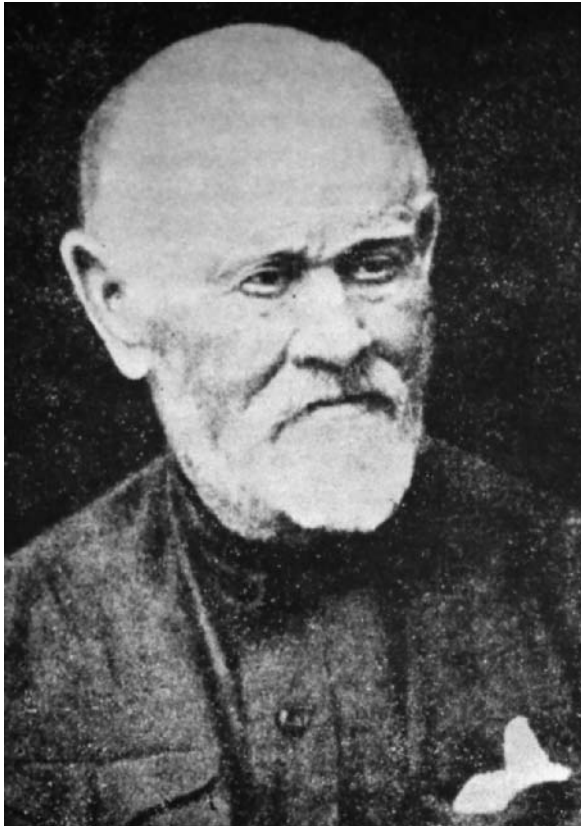
The Saydnaya Triptych was described and analysed more meticulously by Nikodim Kondakov in the second volume of his famous book *Iconography of the Virgin*, published in 1915 by the Imperial Academy of Science. It should be noted that Kondakov had been preparing his work for many years. Initially, his research was intended for the series *Ikonopisnyi podlinnik* ('Authentic Icon Painting') published by the Trustee Committee for Russian Icon Painting, which issued Kondakov's book

были близ города Триполи два участка в селении Бдурам. В том и другом участке масличные деревья перемежаются виноградниками, фидами и другими деревьями. Один из участков приобретен за 8 000 пиастров, а другой за 1600 п[иастров]. Затем 230 п[иастров] израсходованы на совершение купчих, а из остатка, хранящегося в Триполи в надежных руках, предполагается приобрести третий участок с тем, чтобы недостающая сумма была дополнена Сайданайским монастырем' (Uspensky 1896, 142-146).

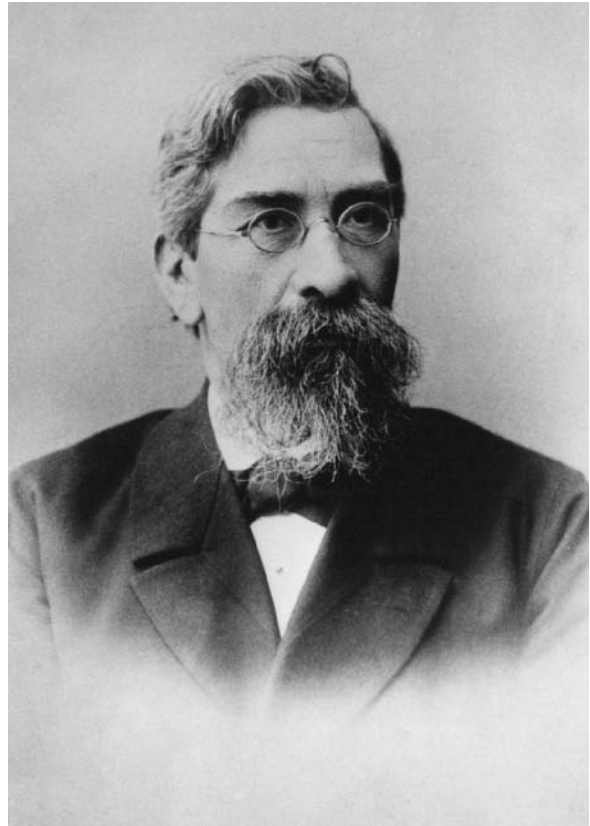
¹⁸ Uspensky 1902, 105-106, Taf. 4.

¹⁹ Uspensky 1902, 105-106.

²⁰ It is very possible that in his publications, Uspensky relied more on the photographs of the triptych than on his own observations.



*Pl. 11. Feodor Uspensky, 1910's
(photograph: State Hermitage Museum)*



*Pl. 12. Nikodim Kondakov, 1900s
(photograph: State Hermitage Museum)*

on the iconography of Jesus Christ in 1905²¹. However, due to a variety of circumstances, amongst others the intrigues in the committee, Kondakov had to continue his research on the iconography of the Virgin in the Imperial Academy of Science, of which he was a member since 1892²². According to some sources, Kondakov obtained a photograph of the Saydnaya Triptych at the latest in 1900, i.e. before the expedition of Uspensky.

²¹ Kondakov 1905. In 1900, Kondakov was appointed as a permanent member, business manager, and assistant chairman of the Committee for the Preservation of Russian Icon Painting.

²² In 1892, Kondakov was elected a corresponding member of the History and Philology Department of the Academy of Science, its ordinary academician (in addition to the staff schedule) in 1898, and became an ordinary academician of the Department of Russian Literature and Language in 1900.

²³ Kondakov 1915, 253.

Kondakov devoted an elaborate passage to the Saydnaya Triptych, even though, at first, he was interested in the chased image of the Virgin and Child on the sliding lid of the triptych. While publishing the two photographs of the open triptych, the obverse and reverse of it, Kondakov expressed with dissatisfaction that 'unfortunately, the pictures were made hastily with the stereoscopic apparatus', and noted that 'at present, the lack of a satisfactory photograph prevents us from a more precise chronological determination of the triptych'²³. The latter remark is somewhat strange because in the footnotes of his work Kondakov mentioned Uspensky's publication, in which, as was noted above, the triptych was reproduced in its actual size in a photograph of perfect quality. Kondakov gave a very scrupulous description of the triptych and his text includes details that could not be found in the description provided by Uspensky. Reading Kondakov's text the conclusion could be drawn that the



Pl. 13. *The triptych in the Monastery of Saydnaya (Photograph by Nadezhda Uspenskaya in 1900)*

scholar did not personally see the triptych but used a very precise description of an eyewitness. It is more likely that the photograph and description were made at the scholar's request by someone from the Russian diplomatic mission in Damascus.

Kondakov himself also visited Syria, since from 8 August to 16 December 1891 he led an expedition of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society to Syria and Palestine. The outbreak of cholera at the end of 1891 prevented the expedition to reach all of its aims, such as the survey of the monuments located in the upper and central parts of Syria. Meanwhile, the expedition went to Damascus and the prominent scholar Jacob Ivanovich Smirnov, a member of the expedition and a student of Kondakov, was able to visit and study the St Thomas Monastery near the village of Saydnaya²⁴. However, he probably did not have the opportunity to see the Convent of Our Lady. In any case, if Smirnov would have photographed the Saydnaya Triptych in 1891, this

unique object would have been mentioned and published by Kondakov in his study on the Byzantine enamels from 1892²⁵.

We return to the analysis of the Saydnaya Triptych in Kondakov's *Iconography of the Virgin*. The author believed that the triptych could be dated to the tenth century or, at the utmost, the first half of the eleventh century. In his opinion, this date follows from 'the enamel images and garnet decoration at the borders that are identical to the setting of a Gospel from the collection of St Mark in Venice'. Kondakov's observation that the cross on the outside doors of the triptych resembles the cross of Queen Tamara from the Gelati Monastery in Georgia was correct and important. No less important were his observations about the chased plaque

²⁴ Kondakov 1904, 69, Ill. 4.

²⁵ Kondakov 1892.

of the Virgin and Child on the sliding lid of the triptych. Kondakov suggested that the plaque replaced a lost enamel image and probably reproduced the miracle-working icon of the Virgin and Child kept in the Monastery of Saydnaya. He believed that 'following from stylistic and chronological arguments', the plaque with the image of the Virgin and Child 'cannot be dated later than the tenth century and may even belong to the eighth-ninth century'. As a result, Kondakov dated the triptych with enamels to the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century, but the chased plaque with the image of the Virgin and Child to the eighth-ninth century²⁶.

After the publications of Uspensky and Kondakov the Saydnaya Triptych vanished from scholarly sight for many years. Travellers and scholars who visited the Monastery of Saydnaya in the twentieth century did not leave any record on it. This is not surprising since, as we shall see below, from 1913 the triptych was not kept in the monastery anymore.

THE SAYDNAYA TRIPTYCH AND THE STATE HERMITAGE MUSEUM

The triptych came to the Hermitage collection on 24 August 1955 from the Central Museum Fund of the Suburb Imperial Palaces²⁷, at first for temporary custody, and from 18 July 1956 for permanent keeping²⁸. The documents accompanying this acquisition describe the triptych very scrupulously, recording the quantity of gold and silver but without any information on its provenance. However, several documents mention the inventory numbers that allow us to connect the triptych with the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoye Selo, the residence of the last Russian emperor to the south of St Petersburg. Three inventory numbers are listed

in the documents: A-3883, IIX – 1502-VI and 16-1484. The first indicates that the triptych was in the Alexander Palace, the second is an inventory number of the Central Museum Fund of the Suburb Imperial Palaces ('IIX' stands for 'Central Fund' in Russian), and the third number can be connected to the pre-Revolution inventories of property in the Imperial Palaces.

Acquired by the State Hermitage Museum as an outstanding example of Byzantine art, the Saydnaya Triptych immediately drew the attention of Alisa Vladimirovna Bank, curator of the Byzantine collection. She mentioned the triptych in several publications²⁹, and devoted to it an article published in 1969 in which special attention was given to the history of its arrival in Russia³⁰. Despite archival research made by Bank, questions on when and how the triptych came to Russia were left open. She came to the conclusion that the triptych could have been brought to the country between 1900, when Uspensky saw it in the Saydnaya Monastery, and 1917, the year of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. As the most probable date Bank proposed the period before 1914, the beginning of the First World War.

In her famous book *Byzantine Art in Collections of the Soviet Union*, first published in 1966 and several times reprinted in 1975-1987 in Russian, English, French, and other languages, Bank reproduced a colour image of the Saydnaya Triptych. She dated it to the eleventh century and as parallels to it named the cloisonné triptych from Martvili, Georgia, and the so-called Stavelot Reliquary containing two Byzantine enamel triptychs from the P.J. Morgan Library in New York. As possible prototypes for the enamel plaques with images of Christ Enthroned and St John the Forerunner, Bank suggested the enamels of the famous Limburg Stau-rotheke; for the decorative design of the triptych she mentioned the no less famous Khakhuli Triptych from the Gelati Monastery in Georgia³¹.

Bank presented the main results of her research more broadly in her article of 1969. Regarding the dating of the enamel plaques, she shared the opinion of Uspensky and, especially, Kondakov that the triptych was made in the first half of the eleventh century. Bank compared the type, size, and decoration of the Hermitage object to the triptych from Martvili and the Stavelot Reliquary; she noted the parallels to the triptych from Monopoli known to her from Italian publications of 1964 and 1965³².

²⁶ Kondakov 1915, 251-253.

²⁷ Archiv Otdela Vostoka Gosudarstvennogo Ermitaža (AOVGE), Act no. 165 from August 24, 1955.

²⁸ AOVGE, Act no. 149 from July 18, 1956.

²⁹ Bank 1956, 344; *idem* 1966, 311-312, 365; *idem* 1967, 239, Pl. 5.

³⁰ Bank 1969, 177-182.

³¹ Bank 1966, 311-312, 365; *idem* 1977, 309, Pls 197-201; *idem* 1978, 309, Pls 197-201; *idem* 1985, 307, Pls 195-199.

³² Bank mentions D'Elia 1964, 5-6, Tav. 1; Lipinsky 1965, 81-94, Tav. XXV-XXVI.

She repeated Kondakov's observation about the similarity of the cross depicted on the triptych's lid with the so-called cross of Queen Tamara. Bank noted that the enamel plaques are of lesser artistic quality than the enamels of the Limburg Stau-rotheke and on the setting of Gospel no. 100 from the Marcian Library in Venice, and that they are younger than the enamels of the Monopoli Triptych. Bank made an important observation about the chased plaques: she pointed out that all of them, and specifically the images of the Virgin of the Deisis, the Virgin with the Child on the lid and the four chased crosses in rosettes, are later additions and were made simultaneously³³.

After the publications by Bank, the Saydnaya Triptych was often mentioned in works on Byzantine and Georgian cloisonné enamels. For example, it was published in books by Leila Khuskivadze, and in the exhibition catalogues *Byzantine Art in the Collection of the USSR* (Leningrad-Moscow, 1975-1977), *Christians in the Holy Land* (St Petersburg, 1998), and *Sinai, Byzantium, Russia* (St Petersburg, 2000)³⁴. The triptych was published by Holger Klein in his book on Byzantine reliquaries, at present the most fundamental research on this matter³⁵. Klein compares the Hermitage Triptych with the Stavelot reliquary and attentively studied its lattice decoration Referring to numerous parallels.

Some archival documents confirming that the triptych was brought from the Saydnaya Monastery to Russia in 1913 were published by the author of the present article in 1999 and 2008³⁶.

THE SAYDNAYA TRIPTYCH AND PATRIARCH GREGORY IV OF ANTIOCH

When working on her article of 1969 about the Saydnaya Triptych, Bank had turned her attention to the archival materials connected with the activities of the Patriarch Gregory IV (Haddad) of Antioch (1906-1928; Pl. 14). The patriarch had proposed the Russian government to organize a special museum of the Patriarchate of Antioch in St Petersburg, or special rooms in one of the important Russian museums, with the intention to transfer the ancient valuable items from the Patriarchate to Russia. He believed that they would be safer in Russia than in the Orient. There were good reasons for this decision, e.g. the mass plundering and destruction of the ancient objects of Orthodoxy in Syria and Turkey. However, among the examples



Pl. 14. Patriarch Gregory IV
(photograph: State Hermitage Museum)

of destroyed antiquities Patriarch Gregory IV also mentioned the burning of manuscripts from the Saydnaya Convent; he asked to take 'the memorabilia of the Orthodox church and those ancient artefacts that perish due to the ignorance of the priests themselves and the brutish attacks by the Jesuits, American missionaries, and western collectors, not to mention the Muslims'³⁷.

Correspondence on this matter began in 1909, and at the same time the Hermitage accepted antique glass and ceramics donated to Emperor

³³ Bank 1969, 177-182.

³⁴ Chuskivadze 1981, 47-48, 86; *idem* 1984, 29; *Iskusstvo Vizantii* 1977, T. 2, 78, no. 537; Catalogue St Petersburg 1998, 49, no. 59; Catalogue St Petersburg/London 2000, 71, no. V-38.

³⁵ Klein 2004, 151, 211, 249.

³⁶ Pyatnitsky 1999, 51-54; *idem* 2008, 182-203.

³⁷ The State Hermitage Museum, Archive, fond 1, opis' V, delo 20-1909, 90-91.

Nicolas II by the patriarch³⁸. The Saydnaya Triptych was not among them. The collection consisted of 58 items. Among them were: 51 ancient glass objects (48 in excellent condition and 3 broken); 1 figurine made out of painted plaster, probably of Cypriot provenance; 3 Egyptian faience objects (figurines of the god Bes and ushapti, and a vessel), and 3 clay lamps³⁹.

In 1913 Patriarch Gregory IV himself came to St Petersburg to take part in the celebration of the Tercentenary of the Romanov dynasty. However, the Saydnaya Triptych was not mentioned on the list of gifts presented by the patriarch to the tsar and Bank could not discover any reference to it in other documents of 1913-1914 either⁴⁰.

In the 1980s, for several years unsuccessfully, I tried to retrace the archival materials that would have explained the story of the bringing of the Saydnaya Triptych to Russia. After studying numerous documents on the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty, I finally succeeded in locating the evidence confirming that the triptych was brought from Saydnaya in 1913 by Patriarch Gregory IV of Antioch⁴¹. The confidential letter no. 576 from 6 June 1913 written by the Konstantin Argiropulo, a secretary of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Vladimir Sabler, an Oberprokurator of the Holy Synod, recommending to award the officials from the Patriarchate of Antioch with Russian Orders drew my attention. Argiropulo wrote:

*The Ministry of Foreign Affairs believes that it is very desirable to award Mother Maria, mother superior of the Monastery of Our Lady in Saydnaya, with a gold pectoral cross, since from this monastery an old and precious icon of the Virgin Mary was given to the blessed Patriarch Gregory who presented it to our emperor*⁴².

³⁸ Kunina 1997, nos 158, 412, 430.

³⁹ Rossijskij Gosudarstvennyj Istoričeskij Archiv, St Petersburg (RGIA), fond 472, opis' 43 (501/2733), delo 140, 55-55 reverse.

⁴⁰ Bank 1969, 177-178.

⁴¹ Pyatnitsky 1999, 51-54.

⁴² RGIA, fond 797, opis' 83 (III otdelenie, 4 stol), delo 18, list 202. Based on this document, we can say that the image of the Virgin with Child on the sliding lid was assumed to be the important one.

⁴³ RGIA, fond 797, opis' 83 (III otdelenie, 4 stol), delo 18, list 211.

⁴⁴ Catalogue St Petersburg 1998, 124-125, no. 161; Pyatnitsky/Zournatzis, forthcoming.

The request was ratified and Mother Maria was granted the 'pectoral cross issued by the Holy Synod'⁴³. Thus, thanks to the discovered documents it became possible to conclude that the triptych was in fact brought from Saydnaya by Patriarch Gregory IV of Antioch for presenting it to Tsar Nicolas II on behalf of the nuns of the monastery.

Among other gifts brought by the delegation of the Patriarchate of Antioch was the splendid shroud of 1712, brocaded with silk, gilded and silvered threads originating from the Monastery of Our Lady of Balamand. The shroud was first placed in the Feodorovsky Cathedral of the Icon of the Mother of God in Tsarskoye Selo, then after the Revolution of 1917 it was transferred to the Catherine Palace Museum in Tsarskoye Selo, and finally in 1934, it came to the Hermitage⁴⁴.

The close contacts of the Patriarchate of Antioch with Russia were not accidental. Patriarch Gregory IV was elected to the seat in 1906 but, according to the weekly publication *The Voice of Truth* from January 1909, 'he is still outside of the canonical relations with the rest of the Greek Patriarchs of the Orthodox Orient, since, for reasons of ethnical virtue, they do not recognize his election legitimate' (the patriarch was not Greek by origin – Y.P.). Yet this did not prevent the blessed Gregory to manage the affairs of the Church of Antioch with success. In this way and with the help of the Holy Synod, he provided almost all the vacant metropolitan chairs in Syria with worthy candidates; he began reforming the Theological Seminary of Balamand, established a printing house in the patriarchate, and launched, for the first time in the patriarchate, a theological journal in Arabic, the first volume of which was published in early 1909. The pro-Russian attitude in the politics of Gregory IV is obvious; his position as a patriarch was disputed and he sought the support of the mighty and rich Russian Church and Russian state. The empire, in its turn, as indicated in the documents of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was also interested in expanding and increasing its influence in the Orthodox Orient, especially in the period before the First World War.

To be able to travel to Russia, the delegation of the Oriental clergy had to obtain the special permission from Emperor Nicolas II (Pl. 15). In letter no. 44 from 14 January 1913, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs addressed to the Oberprokurator



Pl. 15. Portrait of Tzar Nicolas II by Valentin Serov, 1900; The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

of the Holy Synod Vladimir Sabler with a request to get 'royal authorization' for the journey of Patriarch Gregory IV to St Petersburg⁴⁵. Sabler, in his turn, expressed his view that the arrival of the Patriarch of Antioch 'will make a favourable impression on the Syrian population'⁴⁶. On 17 January 1913, the issue was raised before Emperor Nicolas II and he gave his permission for the coming of the patriarch. In four days, on 21 January, the royal decision was followed by the resolution of the Holy Synod, and preparations to meet the Patriarch of Antioch began⁴⁷. The mission, according to a telegram sent from Odessa to V.I. Iatskevich, chief of the Oberprokuror's chancellery of the Holy Synod, included: Alexander (Seleucian), the Metropolitan of Tripoli; Bishop Gabriel Kardus; archpriest Nicholas Shkhadi (the white priest); priest Ignatius; archdeacon Foma Dibo; deacon Demetrius Murr; 'mosaicist' (mother-of-pearl craftsman) Abdo Nakhat; the Lebanon merchant John Abufarakh; qawwas (interpreter) George; and maid Susanna Haddad, sister of the Patriarch⁴⁸. The Russian consul in Damascus, Prince Boris Shakhovskoy, also came to St Petersburg at this time. Representatives of the Monastery of Saydnaya were not included in the suite of the patriarch.

Patriarch Gregory IV of Antioch and Metropolitan Alexander of Tripoli had several audiences with the Russian Emperor, in both St Petersburg and Tsarskoye Selo. Emperor Nicolas II mentioned the audiences in Tsarskoye Selo on 7 March and 16 April in his diary. An entry from Thursday 7 March 1913, says: 'Between the reports, together we [Emperor Nicolas II and Empress Alexandra Fedorovna – Y.P.] received the Patriarch of Antioch accompanied by the Metropolitan of Tripoli. We received Arabian gifts from him and many

valuable manuscripts and books'⁴⁹. In an entry from Tuesday 16 April, Nicolas II wrote:

At 11 o'clock we drove with all the children to the palace grounds where there was a church parade of the Life Grenadiers. The regiment reported in great order. After breakfast I returned home at 1.45. There was the last exchange of kisses with coreligionists, old believers, and community foremen of the three local districts. After that we received the Patriarch of Antioch and bid him farewell, since he is leaving⁵⁰.

However, it is more likely that the triptych from Saydnaya and the shroud from Balamand were presented to the tsar during an official audience in the Winter Palace on 21 February 1913, when the clergy made speeches on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty (Pl. 16). In the report no. 5961 from 6 July 1913, the aforementioned V.K. Sabler writes: 'The representatives of the Oriental patriarchs, who addressed their greetings on the occasion of the Tercentenary celebration, were honoured with imperial decorations'⁵¹. There exists also information about the festival celebrations and an audience on this day in the diary of Nicolas II, though the Patriarch of Antioch Gregory IV is not mentioned. The entry from Thursday 21 February 1913, written in the Winter Palace at St Petersburg, says:

The day of celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty was a bright and true spring one. In the morning I received several visitors and went to walk in the garden. At 12.15 I with Alexei in a stroller, Mama, and Alix in the Russian carriage and, finally, all daughters in a landau we headed for the Cathedral of the Kazan Icon. In front and behind us rode the Life Guards Cossacks. In the Cathedral, the manifest was read aloud and the ceremonial prayer was said. We returned to the Winter Palace in the same way at 1.30. Our spirit was joyous, it reminded me of the coronation. We had breakfast with Mama. At 3.45 everyone gathered in the Malachite room, and received congratulations until 5.30 in the concert hall – about 500 people passed through. Alix became very tired and went to bed⁵².

In the 1910s, the Alexander Palace in Tsarskoye Selo became practically the permanent residence of the last Russian Tsar. For this reason the numerous

⁴⁵ RGIA, fond 797, opis' 83 (II otделение, 3 stol), delo 46, list 2.

⁴⁶ RGIA, fond 797, opis' 83 (II otделение, 3 stol), delo 46, list 6.

⁴⁷ RGIA, fond 797, opis' 83 (II otделение, 3 stol), delo 46, list 7, 9 oborot.

⁴⁸ RGIA, fond 797, opis' 83 (II otделение, 3 stol), delo 46, list 23, 30.

⁴⁹ Koslov 1991, 387; about manuscripts and rare book collections, see Kračkovsky 1960, 423-444.

⁵⁰ Koslov 1991, 393.

⁵¹ RGIA, fond 797, opis' 83 (III otделение, 4 stol), delo 18, list 211.

⁵² Koslov 1991, 384.



У Казанскаго собора.
Торжественное празднованіе 300-лѣтія царствованія Дома Романовыхъ, 21 февраля с. г.,
въ С.-Петербургѣ. По фот. А. Оцуца.

*Pl. 16. Ceremony of the 300 years of Romanov family in St Petersburg, February 21 1913
(photograph: State Hermitage Museum)*



Pl. 17. Alexander Palace in Tsarskoye Selo

religious objects, icons especially, presented to the imperial family during this time, were placed in the private rooms of the Alexander Palace, in the Cathedral of the Palace of Catherine the Great, and in the Feodorovsky Cathedral in Tsarskoye Selo. The small and precious Saydnaya Triptych was kept in the private apartments of the emperor's family in the Alexander Palace.

THE SAYDNAYA TRIPTYCH AND THE ALEXANDER PALACE IN TSARSKOYE SELO

The Alexander Palace was built in 1792-1796 and was designed by the architect Giacomo Quarenghi for Alexander Pavlovich, the oldest grandson of Catherine the Great and the future Emperor Alexander I. For 120 years the palace was one of the suburban residences of several generations of the imperial family of Russia. Its first owner, Alexander Pavlovich, lived in the palace slightly over two months in 1796 and did not stay there after that period. The following 25 years the Alexander Palace remained mainly unoccupied. In 1821, the Grand Duke Nikolay Pavlovich, a brother of Alexander and future Emperor Nicolas I, made it his family home. Later, during the reign of Alexander II, a son of Nicolas I, his mother, the widowed Empress Alexandra Fedorovna (1798-1860) and the youngest children of Nicolas I lived there. In 1867, the heir to the throne, Grand Duke Alexander Alexandrovich (the future Emperor Alexander III) settled there with his wife, Grand Duchess Maria Fedorovna (Dagmar of Denmark). After 1882, when Emperor Alexander III accepted the throne, he lived only occasionally in the palace, preferring the one in Gatchina. His son Emperor Nicolas II, however, loved Tsarskoye Selo and practically made the Alexander Palace his permanent residence. He settled there almost immediately after his wedding with Alexandra Fedorovna. The wedding took place on 14 November 1894 and on 22 November the newly weds left for Tsarskoye Selo where they spent several days in the Alexander Palace. On 25 November, Nicolas II wrote in his diary: '... what a heavenly

life together in such a beautiful place as Tsarskoye!’, and the following day, on 26 November: ‘My bliss is infinite – it is very sad to leave Tsarskoye that became such a dear place to both of us ...!’⁵³. The imperial family spent practically only the winters in St Petersburg, and from 1914, with the beginning of the First World War, lived permanently in the Alexander Palace. From this palace in August 1917 the family went on their last travel⁵⁴.

After the first bourgeois revolution in February 1917, the Provisional Government declared that the imperial palaces of Tsarskoye Selo were now under the jurisdiction of the state and created a special Art Historical Committee for access and to inventory the palaces' properties. Under the Soviet regime, Tsarskoye Selo was renamed Detskoye Selo; the Alexander Palace became a museum and in June 1918 it was opened for the public⁵⁵.

Where in the Alexander Palace should the unique Byzantine triptych from the Monastery of Saydnaya have been kept? Most likely, it was among the numerous icons, crosses, and small icons that decorated the chapel and bedroom of Emperor Nicolas II and Empress Alexandra Fedorovna (Pl. 18). In 1895, the rooms in the left wing of the Alexander Palace had been reconstructed for the couple and were called the ‘private apartments’. Rooms nos 21 and 22 were furnished as the bedroom and dressing room of the emperor and his wife; they were decorated with ‘an abundance of icons, small icons, and religious photographs’⁵⁶. Most of these items had been presented to the imperial couple by various people, institutions, churches, and monasteries in connection with religious holidays and other commemorative occasions in honour of the imperial family, along with the blessings and gifts received by them during their travels through Russia⁵⁷. Part of these objects were placed in cases, the rest was tightly hung on the walls (‘carpet hanging’). The gifts were of varying quality and artistic level. The objects of high artistic quality were often placed near the mass-produced postcards and paper icons, but the pious imperial family treated all of them with equal respect. There were also rare, ancient pieces, though they ‘were lost’ surrounded by the great number of ‘ordinary’ material. Precisely among these ‘praying’ icons and crosses the unique tryptich from the Saydnaya Monastery could have had its place. Despite the preserved drawings and photographs of the private apartments, including the bedrooms of the emperor's

⁵³ Koslov 1991, 50.

⁵⁴ Kudzevič 1998, 13-16.

⁵⁵ Gollerbach 1922, 104-105.

⁵⁶ Gollerbach 1922, 55.

⁵⁷ Zavadskaya 1998, 50-52.



Pl. 18. *The bedroom of Nicolas II in the Alexander Palace (photograph: State Hermitage Museum)*

family, it is impossible to locate the exact place of the triptych amidst hundreds of crosses and icons present in the bedroom and chapel⁵⁸.

Unfortunately, the guide books and other publications about the museum in the Alexander Palace from 1918-1928 paid little attention to the private rooms of the last Russian emperor; only a few lines were said of them⁵⁹. 'These rooms are more interesting for everyday-life conditions rather than artistically. Their furnishing clearly demonstrates the tastelessness and aesthetical simplicity of the people who lived in them', Eugenie Gollerbach wrote in 1922⁶⁰. Earlier, in 1919, Anatoly Lunacharsky, the minister of Culture, expressed the same opinion: 'Our artists offered to leave the whole lodging of Nicolas II as an example of bad taste, and so it was done'⁶¹.

Although the Alexander Palace was declared a museum, its left wing was given to the Young Communists Children House in 1918; later, its

right wing was occupied by the Resort House of the NKVD, the predecessor of the KGB.

From 1918, the museum objects of the Alexander Palace were gradually transferred to different institutions. Especially furniture, toys, text books, and other books of the children of Nicolas II were given to children's labour colonies. In the 1920-1930s, there were numerous attempts to close the museum in the Alexander Palace forever, which was achieved to some degree. In 1931, the 'Historical rooms of Alexander III and Empress Maria Fedorovna' in the left wing of the palace were closed; at the same time the rooms of the tsar's

⁵⁸ Bobrov 2007, 4-9, Figs 4, 5, 7, 8.

⁵⁹ Gollerbach 1922; Lukomsky 1918; Yakovlev 1927a; *idem* 1927b.

⁶⁰ Gollerbach 1922, 53.

⁶¹ Text after Chodasevič 1998, 69.

children, the so-called 'Children's Half' were closed as well. The objects were moved to different museums and institutions but the greater part of them was sent to the 'Antikvariat' and similar firms 'for sale'⁶². With all these peripeties, one can only wonder how the small precious Byzantine triptych was able to remain intact.

At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War in 1941, the most valuable items from the palace museums of Tsarskoye Selo were evacuated inland, to Novosibirsk and Sarapul. All precious objects, including the Saydnaya tryptich, were selected to be transferred first. Some pieces, mostly the large objects, were moved to Leningrad and placed in the basement of the Cathedral of St Isaac. The objects and sculpture that, due to the shortage of time, were not evacuated, were hidden on the premises, in the caches and in the palace's basement⁶³. During the Nazi occupation of Tsarskoye Selo, the Alexander Palace served as the headquarters of the German staff. The cache with the museum treasures was discovered in the basement and ransacked⁶⁴.

In 1945, after the end of the war, it was decided to restore the palaces and parks of Tsarskoye Selo (then renamed Pushkin), Pavlovsk, Peterhof, and Gatchina. According to this plan, the central part of the Alexander Palace should be allocated to the museum. However, in November 1945, Sergei Ivanovich Vavilov, the President of the Academy of Science, proposed to create the Alexander Pushkin Humanities Center in the Alexander Palace, to open a museum dedicated to the famous Russian poet and to transfer the Institute of Literature of the Academy of Science of the USSR from Leningrad. The project was approved by the government of the Soviet Union and in March 1946, the palace was handed over to the Academy of Science. The new plan of the palace's reconstruction was made in accordance with its future purpose. The project included the restoration of several private rooms of Nicolas II. Since the Humanities Center was to be opened on A.S. Pushkin's anniversary, the restoration works were sped up. Indeed, on 10 June 1949,

the ceremonial opening of the A.S. Pushkin Museum took place. Meanwhile, in 1949, the so-called Leningrad case was launched and the leading figures of the Leningrad administration became the victim of repression. During this action the administration and staff members of the Institute of Literature were accused of formalism and cosmopolitanism. Also, in January 1951, S.I. Vavilov suddenly died and on 31 August 1951, the Alexander Palace was handed over to the Military Navy Department at the order of the Council of Ministers of the USSR; the restoration of the museum was postponed for decades⁶⁵.

When the museum objects were brought back from Novosibirsk (fall 1944) and Sarapul (December 1945), the suburbs of Leningrad still laid in ruins. On 10 May 1945 the Central Museum Fund of the Imperial Suburb Palaces was created. This fund acquired the objects from the former suburban palaces. A.M. Kuchumov, director of the Central Museum Fund, was put in charge of the institution. The storage buildings for the objects were the restored Alexander Palace, later the Catherine Palace, the Stables in Tsarskoye Selo, and finally the service building in Pavlovsk. The revival of the Leningrad suburbs gradually began in 1946 and the exhibition activities of the Central Museum Fund of the Imperial Suburb Palaces became a noteworthy fact in the cultural life of Tsarskoye Selo, Peterhof, and Pavlovsk. In the summer of 1956, by order no. 239 of 27 July, the Central Museum Fund of the Imperial Suburb Palaces and the Palace Museum in Pavlovsk were merged. After this action it became clear that the Central Museum Fund would be abolished soon, and so it was in two years' time. By order no. 696 from 1 November 1958 issued by the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, the Central Museum Fund of the Imperial Suburb Palaces was closed. In the 1950s, the administration of the Pavlovsk Palace Museum began organizing the museum exhibitions of the palace. To be able to get the wanted objects, the administration of the Pavlovsk Palace Museum campaigned for an extensive exchange of the museum objects with other Russian museums, for example the Hermitage, the Russian Museum, the Tretyakov Gallery, and the Novgorod Museum⁶⁶. The objects offered for exchange in the first place were naturally not from the Pavlovsk Palace but from the former palaces in Tsarskoye Selo (Pushkin), Peterhof, and Gatchina. As a result of this

⁶² Antifeeva/Čistyakov 1998, 67-68; Bardovskaya 1998, 71-74; Chodasevič 1998, 69-71.

⁶³ Lemus 2005, 375-394.

⁶⁴ Bott/Faibisovič 1997, 13.

⁶⁵ Soldatova 1998, 74-77.

⁶⁶ Belanina 2005, 449-463.

exchange, in 1955, the Byzantine triptych originating from the Saydnaya Monastery was given to the Hermitage. Today, this small unique item adorns the Byzantine collection of the most famous museum in Russia.

APPENDIX: THE DRAWING OF GRIGOROVICH-BARSKY

Mat IMMERZEEL

The photolithography of the drawing of the Monastery of Our Lady in Saydnaya made by Vasily Grigorovich-Barsky, reproduced in Yuri Pyatnitsky's article, forms a more than welcome addition to the earlier, fanciful western images of the site (Fig. 1)⁶⁷. Since Grigorovich-Barsky made this sketch on the spot during his stay in Saydnaya in 1728, it can be labelled as a unique record of the situation before the reconstruction works of the third quarter of the nineteenth century, which included the erection of a new church⁶⁸.

The artist was obviously positioned on the slope of the mountain to the north of the monastery, with a view of its north side (Pl. 1). The carefully rendered irregular outer wall still exists and is reproduced fairly correctly, but today consecutive later constructions built against and on this wall hamper full sight of the buildings behind, and the original rock-cut stairs leading to the north-west entrance have been replaced by concrete stairs⁶⁹. According to the drawing, the present utilitarian buildings to the west of the church, which include a reception room, the refectory and the kitchen, had predecessors. The vault of the kitchen in the basement, probably medieval, reveals that the renovations were limited to the upper levels⁷⁰.

THE MONASTIC CHURCH

Both Grigorovich-Barsky and the English vicar Richard Pococke (1737) describe the predecessor of the present church as a building with a basilical plan consisting of a central nave with four aisles separated by four rows of five columns⁷¹. The earliest reference to this structure can be found in a work published by Ambrosius Zeebout in 1557. This book, in Dutch, was a compilation of notes made by the Flemish nobleman Joos van Ghistele during his stay in the Middle East in 1481, incorporating several earlier accounts⁷². The extract on

the monastic church seems to be based upon van Ghistele's own observations and turns out to be the most reliable description of the building found so far:

*The church is very beautiful and large, and is the parish church of the village, sharp at the top as they make roofs in these countries, which looks strange; at the front is a beautiful portal, resting on four pillars like a summer house. The church is also large and beautiful at the inside, having twenty columns to support the vault and the heavy weight; in the front of the nave are four long corridors, not including the principal one in the middle*⁷³.

Not only are these observations corroborated by the two other accounts of some 250 years later, they are also in line with the eighteenth-century drawing: the portico rendered in front of the single entrance has an arcade resting on four carefully drawn (antique?) columns, whereas the nave has a saddle roof and towers high above the flat-roofed aisles (1 on Fig. 1; Fig. 2). Taking into consideration the few rather small windows in the nave's north elevation and in the wall of the northern aisle, it becomes clear why, in the 1840s, Archimandrite Porfiriy Uspensky described the building as 'a pretty big but dark place'⁷⁴. Apparently virtually nothing had changed between van Ghistele's visit in the fifteenth century and the renovations of the 1860s, when the church was replaced by the present building. The exception to this was the apse in which Saydnaya's famous icon was kept, which is now known as the Chapel of al-^cAdra⁷⁵. In an earlier

⁶⁷ Immerzeel 2007, 13, Figs 2, 3.

⁶⁸ Immerzeel 2007, 19; *idem* 2009, 46.

⁶⁹ The observation of rock-cut stairs can be written on the account of the Dutch visitors Johannes Aegidius van Egmont and John Heyman (van Egmont/Heyman 1759, 261).

⁷⁰ Immerzeel 2007, 19.

⁷¹ Immerzeel 2007, 18-19.

⁷² Zeebout 1998.

⁷³ 'De keercke es zeer schoone ende groot, ende es de prochi-keercke des doorps, boven sceerp ghelijcmen de daken maect in desen landen, dwelc vrende es om sien, vooren met eenen schoonen portale, rustende up vier pilaren ghelijc eenen zomer huuse. Es de zelve keercke binnen ooc groot ende schoone, hebbende om tonderhuden vanden verwelve ende zwaren ghewichte twintich colommen; vooren inden buec zijn vier langhe ganghen, zonder den principalen die inden midden comt' (Zeebout 1998, 302 – translation M.I.).

⁷⁴ See Pyatnitsky's article, 95.

⁷⁵ Immerzeel 2007, 19-20; *idem* 2009, 46-47.

study, I have argued that the central axis of the new church is positioned a few meters to the north of that of its forerunner. The presence of a section of an old wall incorporated in a new one flanking the passage to the garden to the south of the new church corroborates this hypothesis (Pl. 2).

THE VILLAGE CHURCHES

The drawing also depicts several churches outside the monastery, which are named in Russian. To the extreme left we find the Church of St Peter, rendered as a square building with a protruding cornice (2 on Fig. 1; Fig. 3). In the foreground, i.e. to the north of the convent, one can discern the ruined Churches of St Barbara and St Saba (3 and 4 on Fig. 1; Fig. 4), and to the bottom right are the Churches of St John Chrysostom and St Thomas (5 and 6 on Fig. 1; Figs 5, 6). The Church of St John is depicted roofless, allowing full view of the two arcades separating the nave from the aisles (Fig. 4). Pococke, who came to Saydnaya a few years after Grigorovich-Barsky, furnishes additional information about these churches and some others:

*(...) and there are seven or eight more ruined churches here. Those of St. John, St. Saba and St. Barbara, on the north side, have three naves with an altar at the end of each after the Syrian style; and I saw in them several Doric capitals, and remains of fresco paintings (...)*⁷⁶.

⁷⁶ Pococke 1745, 134; Pococke is aware of the age of the Church of St Peter, which he refers to as 'the church of saint Peter and saint Paul'. The church visited by John Madox in 1825 is very probably the Church of St Barbara. He describes it as follows: 'From this sepulchre I proceeded to a curious excavation in the rock opposite, called the church of St. Babylas, not far from which are the remains of another church of the same name. The arches and pillars still remain, with an altar-piece and paintings on the wall'. (Madox 1834, 143).

⁷⁷ Immerzeel 2009, 48, with further references.

⁷⁸ Immerzeel 2007, 24, Pls 10, 11.

⁷⁹ Maundrell mentions the Churches of St John, St Paul, St Thomas, St Babylas, St Barbara, St Christopher, St Joseph, St Lazarus, the Blessed Virgin, St Demetrius, St Saba, St Peter, St George, All Saints, the Ascension, and the Transfiguration (Wright 1968, 493); see also Immerzeel 2007, 20; *idem* 2009, 48.

⁸⁰ 'Dit clooster heeft voortijts eene zeer vermaerde plecke ghezijn, onder hem hebbende twee ende vijftich andere schoone vermaerde cloosters (sic), daer omtrent gheleghen, maer zijn meest alle te nieuten, onbewoont ende vervallen' (Zeebout 1998, 301).

The Church of St Peter still exists; it is located to the southeast of the monastery and is actually a reused antique mausoleum (Pl. 3)⁷⁷. The Church of St Barbara has been rebuilt, and today it serves as the chapel of the Greek Orthodox cemetery, seen in the foreground of Pl. 1. St Saba's stood along the road from the monastery to the Church of St John at the corner of a small road to the west of the entrance of the cemetery. The building was demolished at some point, but its former location is marked with a large rectangular stone (Pl. 4).

Given the position of the Church of St John Chrysostom on the drawing, this must refer to the present Church of St John the Baptist. An Arabic inscription to the top left of the doorway in the west wall commemorates its renovation in 1745. The arcades resting on two rows of reused late antique columns are still there, as are the paintings that Pococke saw (Pl. 5). Two partly preserved figures depicted on columns at the south side and facing the East, identified as Christ and a standing warrior saint, may date from the twelfth or thirteenth century⁷⁸.

The only sanctuary that cannot be found at the location where Grigorovich-Barsky put it, is the Church of St Thomas. This building is located on a mountain, a few kilometers to the northwest of the village. Like the Church of St Peter, this is a well-preserved Roman building, in this case a temple, which functioned as the sanctuary of a monastic settlement (Pl. 6). Once again, the care with which Grigorovich-Barsky has rendered its structure is striking, e.g. the large stones, the profile corner moulding, the remaining corners of the northern tympanon, and the small apse, which is, of course, a later addition. It should be noticed that inside the present-day building there are barely distinguishable traces of murals on the north wall.

DECLINE

The churches on the drawing are listed amongst the sixteen churches and oratories that Henry Maundrell found 'ruined and desolate' in 1697⁷⁹, but the account of van Ghistele/Zeebout suggests that the decay had already set in centuries earlier:

*The monastery was once a very famous place, under which were fifty-two other beautiful and famous monasteries (sic), situated in the vicinity, but most of them are worthless, uninhabited and fallen into disrepair*⁸⁰.

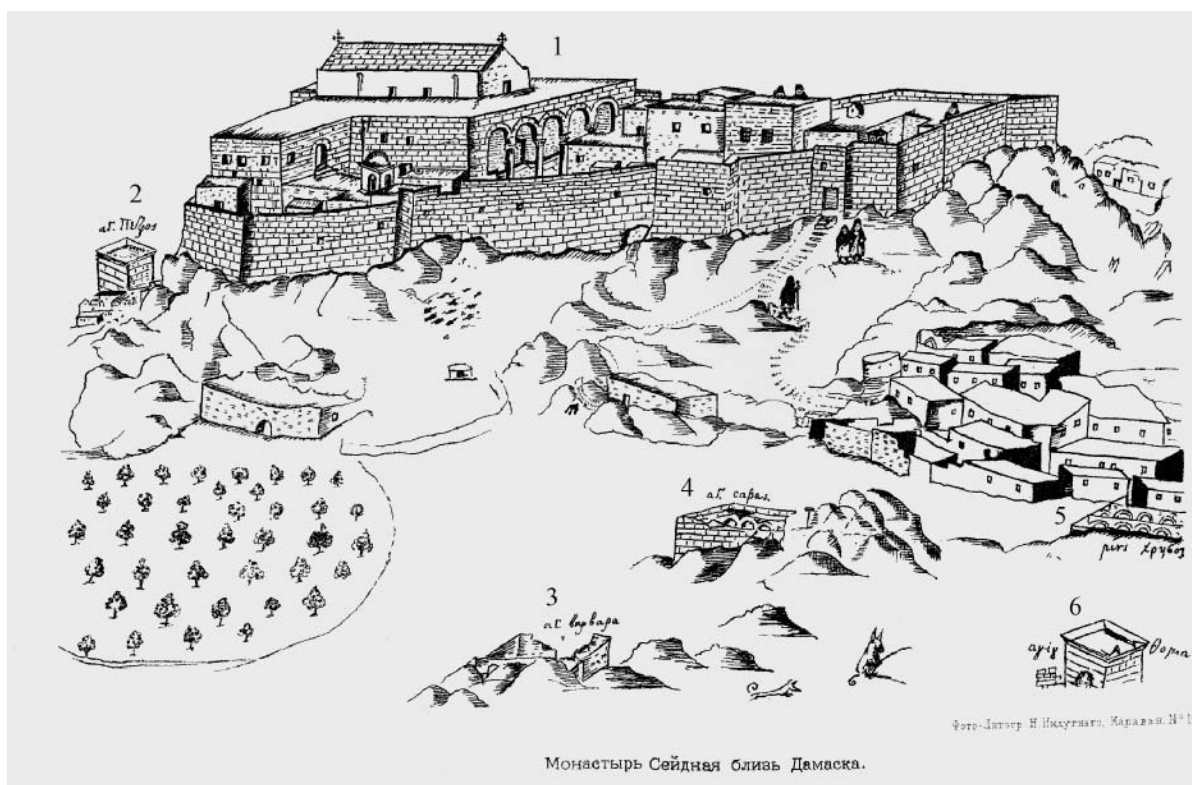


Fig. 1. Drawing of the Monastery of Saydnaya in 1728 (Grigorovich-Barsky, Vol. II, 100-101)



Pl. 1. View from the north on the Monastery of Saydnaya (photograph Mat Immerzeel)

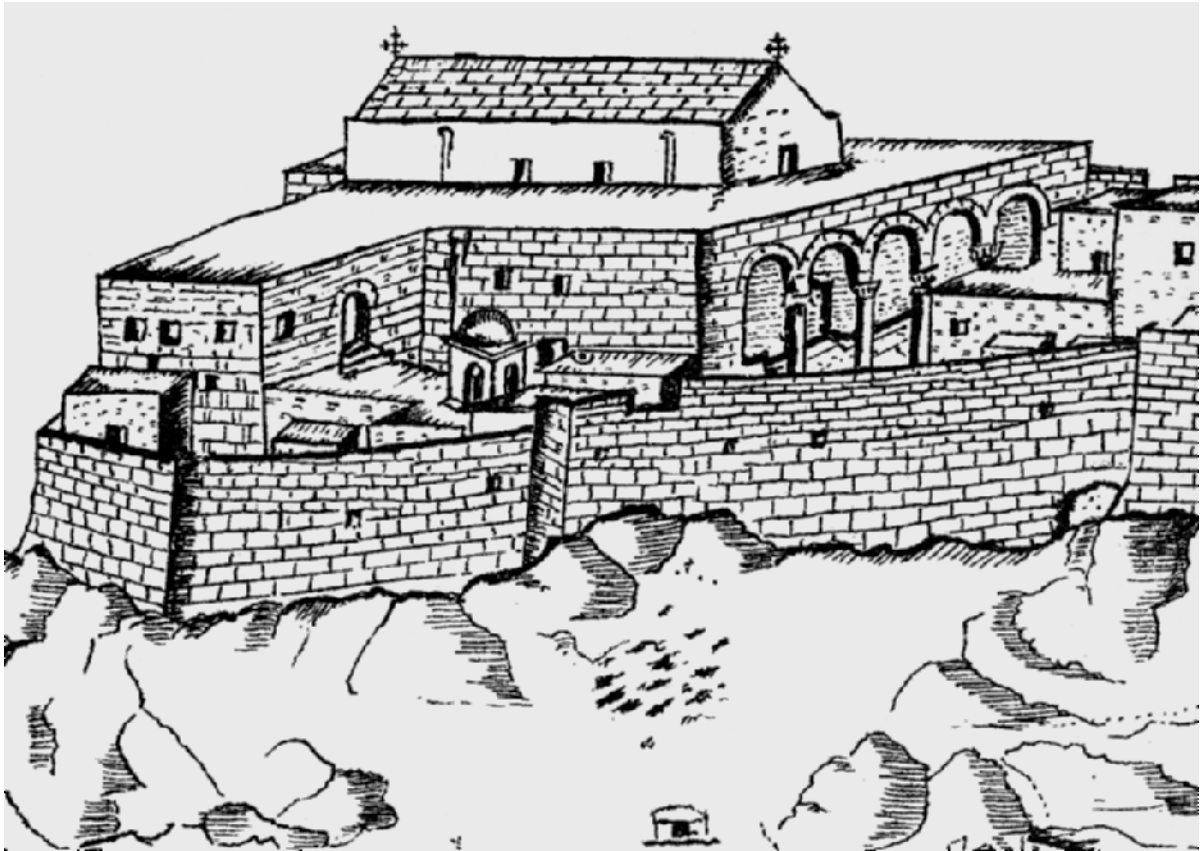


Fig. 2. Detail of Fig. 1: Church of the monastery



*Pl. 2. Remaining part of the south wall of the church
(photograph Mat Immerzeel)*



Fig. 3. Detail of Fig. 1: Church of St Peter



Pl. 3. Church of St Peter
(photograph Mat Immerzeel)

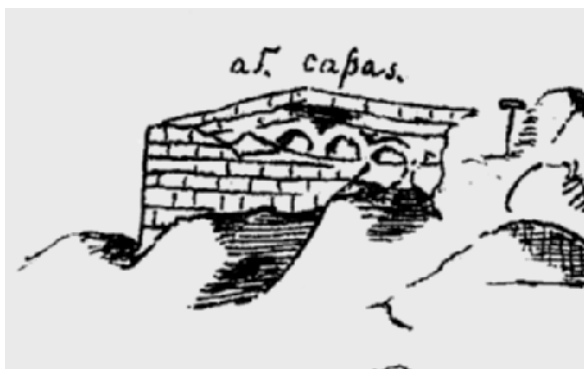


Fig. 4. Detail of Fig. 1: the Church of St Saba



Pl. 4. Stone marking the place of the Church of St Saba
(photograph Mat Immerzeel)

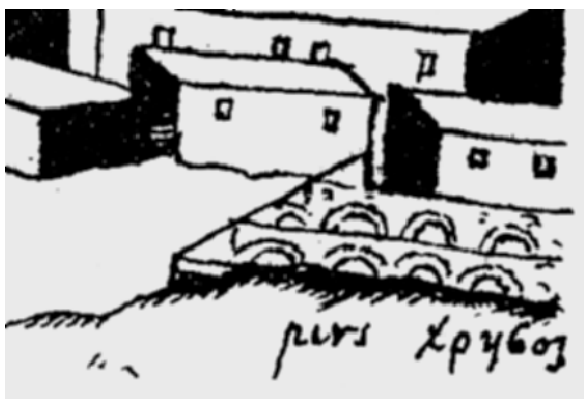


Fig. 5. Detail of Fig. 1: Church of St John Chrysostom



Pl. 5. Church of St John the Baptist
(photograph Mat Immerzeel)



Fig. 6. Detail of Fig. 1: Church of St Thomas



Pl. 6. Church of St Thomas (photograph Mat Immerzeel)

Apparently, the decline of Saydnaya's Christian sanctuaries occurred between the heyday of the village's role as a major attraction for pilgrims, established roughly in the final quarter of the twelfth century⁸¹, and 1481, when van Ghistele visited Saydnaya. It may be assumed that the turning point came with the expulsion of the Mongols from Damascus in 1260, and the subsequent Mamluk attacks, in 1266, on Qara to the north of Saydnaya and the Crusader states⁸². Even though the Mamluks had the Melkite Cathedral of al-Mariamiya and the Syrian Orthodox church in Damascus demolished in 1260, by way of retaliation against the supposed support of the Damascene Christians towards the Mongols⁸³, it is still too early to conclude that similar action was taken in Saydnaya. None of Saydnaya's churches has been fully studied; questions about intentional demolition or decay by negligence can only be answered through additional fieldwork.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Antifeeva, M.A., A.N. Čistyakov 1998, 'Alexandrovskij dvorec v pervie godi Sovetskoi vlasti po materialam Central'nogo Gosudarstvennogo archiva Sankt-Peterburga', in: *Alexandrovskij dvorec: Istoriya: Vladel'ci: Kollekcii: Kratkoe sodержanie dokladov IV Carskosel'skoi naučnoi konferencii*, St Petersburg, 67-68.

- Bacci, M. 2006, 'A Sacred Space for a Holy Icon: The Shrine of Our Lady of Saydnaya', in: A. Lidov (ed.), *Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, Moscow, 1-15.
- Bank, A.V. 1956, 'Vistavka vizantijskich materialov v Gosudarstvennom Ermitaže', *Vizantijskij Vremennik* XI, 340-348.
- Bank, A.V. 1966, *Vizantijskoe iskustvo v sobraniyach Sovetskogo Soyuzu*, Leningrad/Moscow.
- Bank, A.V. 1967, 'Quelques problèmes des arts mineurs byzantins au XI^e siècle', in: J.M. Hussey et al. (eds), *Proceedings of the XIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies. Oxford, 5-10 September 1966*, London, 235-241.
- Bank, A.V. 1969, 'Vizantijskii skladden' s peregorodčatimi emalyami iz Saidanaiskogo monastirya', *Palestinskij Sbornik* 19 (82), 177-182.
- Bank, A.V. 1977, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of Soviet Museums*, Leningrad.
- Bank, A.V. 1978, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of Soviet Museums*, Leningrad/New York.
- Bank, A.V. 1985, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of Soviet Museums*, Leningrad (extended edition).
- Bantish-Kamensky, N.N. 2001, *Reestri Grečeskim delam Moskovskogo archiva Kollegii Inostrannich de: Rossijskij Gosudarstvennij Archiv Drevnich aktov: Fond 52. Opis' 1*, Moscow.
- Baraz, D. 1995, 'The Incarnated Icon of Saidnaya goes West. A Re-examination of the Motif in the Light of New Manuscript Evidence', *Le Muséon* 198, 181-191.
- Bardovskaya, L.V. 1998, 'Zabitie akvareli', in: *Alexandrovskij dvorec: Istoriya: Vladel'ci: Kollekcii: Kratkoe sodержanie dokladov IV Carskosel'skoi naučnoi konferencii*, St Petersburg, 71-74.
- Belanina, V.A. 2005, 'Čentral'noe chranilishe myzeinich fondov prigorodnich dvorcov Leningrada', in: *Chraniteli: Materiali XI Carskosel'skoi naučnoi konferencii*, St Petersburg, 449-463.
- Bobrov, Yu. 2007, 'Late icons as Symbols of Holy Russia: Icons in the Everyday Life of the Russian Royal Family', in: R. Temple (ed.), *The Temple Gallery. Russian Icons. Summer 2007*, London, 4-9.

⁸¹ Immerzeel 2009, 54.

⁸² Immerzeel 2009, 68, 77.

⁸³ Immerzeel 2009, 40.

- Bott, I., V. Faibisovič 1997, *Gosudarstvennij musei-zapovednik 'Carskoe Selo': Alexandrovskij dvorec*, Carskoe Selo.
- Catalogue St Petersburg 1998, *Exhibition catalogue Christians in the Holy Land: The Art of the Melchites and Other Denominations of the Orthodox Church*, St Petersburg.
- Catalogue St Petersburg/London 2000, *Sinai, Byzantium, Russia. Orthodox Art from the Sixth to the Twentieth Century* (Yu. Pyatnitsky et al. eds), London.
- Chodasevič, G.D. 1998, "... Sochranit' Alexandrovskij dvorec kak pamyatnik ...": Popitka likvidacii dvortca-muzeja v 1920-1930-ch godach', in: *Alexandrovskij dvorec: Istoriya: Vladel'ci: Kollekcii: Kratkoe sodержanie dokladov IV Carskosel'skoi naučnoj konferencii*, St Petersburg, 69-71.
- Choždenie kupca Vasiliya Pozdnyakova 1887, *Choždenie kupca Vasiliya Pozdnyakova po svyatim mestam Vostoka. 1558-1561 gg*, Pod redakcij Ch.M. Lopareva, St Petersburg.
- Choždenie Trifona Korobeinikova 1889, *Choždenie Trifona Korobeinikova. 1593-1594 gg*, Pod redakcij Ch.M. Lopareva, St Petersburg.
- Chuskivadze, L.Z. 1981, *Gruzinskie email*, Tbilisi.
- Chuskivadze, L.Z. 1984, *Medieval Cloisonné Enamels at Georgian State Museum of Fine Arts*, Tbilisi.
- D'Elia, M. 1964, *Exhibition Catalogue Mostra dell'arte in Puglia dal tardo antico al rococo*, Bari.
- Egmont, J.E van, J. Heyman 1759, *Travels through Part of Europe, Asia Minor, the Islands of the Archipelago, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Mount Sinai, etc.*, Vol. 2, London.
- Gollerbach, E. 1922, *Detskosl'skie dvorci-musei I parki. Putevoditel'*, St Petersburg.
- Grigorovich-Barsky, V. 1886, *Stranstvovaniya po Svyatim mestam Vostoka s 1723 po 1747 g*, T. II, St Petersburg.
- Grishin, A. 2006, 'Bars'kyj and the Orthodox Community', in: M. Anghold (ed.), *Eastern Christianity*, Cambridge, 210-228 (The Cambridge History of Christianity 5).
- Hamilton, B. 2000, 'Our Lady of Saidnaiya: An Orthodox Shrine Revered by Muslims and Knights Templar at the Time of the Crusades', in: R.N. Swanson (ed.), *The Holy Land, Holy Lands, and Christian History*, Woodbridge/Rochester, NY, 207-215.
- Immerzeel, M. 2007, 'The Monastery of Saydnaya and Its Icon', *ECA* 4, 13-26.
- Immerzeel, M. 2009, *Identity Puzzles. Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, Leuven (OLA 184).
- Iskusstvo Vizantii 1977, *Iskusstvo Vizantii v sobraniyach SSSR. Katalog vystavki*, T. 2, Moscow.
- Kedar, B.Z. 2001, 'Convergences of Oriental Christian, Muslim and Frankish Worshippers: The Case of Saydnaya and the Knights Templar', in: Z. Hunyadi, J. Laszlovszki (eds), *The Crusades and the Military Orders; Expanding the Frontiers of Medieval Latin Christianity*, Budapest, 89-100.
- Klein, H.A. 2004, *Byzanz, der Westen und das 'wahre' Kreuz. Die Geschichte einer Reliquie und ihrer künstlerischen Fassung in Byzanz und im Abendland*, Wiesbaden.
- Kondakov, N.P. 1892, *Vizantijskie email: Sobranie A.V. Zvenigorodskogo: Istoriya I pamyatniki vizantijskoj email*, St Petersburg.
- Kondakov, N.P. 1904, *Archeologičeskoe puteshestvie po Sirii I Palestine*, St Petersburg.
- Kondakov, N.P. 1905, *Licevoj ikonopisnij podlinnik*, T. 1, *Ikonografiya Gospoda Nashego Iisusa Christa*, St Petersburg.
- Kondakov, N.P. 1915, *Ikonografiya Bogomateri*, T. 2, Petrograd.
- Koslov, V.P. (ed.), 1991, *Dnevnik imperatora Nikolaya II*, Moscow.
- Kračkovsky, I.Yu. 1960, 'Arabskie rukopisi iz sobraniya Grigorijya IV, patriarcha antiochijskogo (kratkaya opis')', in: I.Yu. Kračkovsky, *Izbrannye sočineniya*, T. VI, Moscow/Leningrad, 423-444.
- Kudzevič, L.B. 1998, 'Žiteli Alexandrovskogo dvorca – imperatorskaya sem'ya I ee okruženie', in: *Alexandrovskij dvorec: Istoriya: Vladel'ci: Kollekcii: Kratkoe sodержanie dokladov IV Carskosel'skoi naučnoj konferencii*, St Petersburg, 13-16.
- Kunina, N. 1997, *Antichnoe steklo v sobranii Ermitaga*, St Petersburg.
- Lemus, V.V. 2005, 'Evakuacija muzejnich cennostej iz g. Pushkina (1941-1945): Istoričeskaya spravka', in: *Chraniteli: Materiali XI Carskosel'skoi naučnoj konferencii*, St Petersburg, 375-394.
- Leonid, Archimandrite 1871, 'Ierusalem, Palestina I Afon po russkim palomnikom XIV-XVI vekov', in: *Chteniya v imperatorskom Obschestve istorii I drevnostej rossijskich pri Moskovskom universitete*, Kniga 1, 1-122.
- Lipinsky, A. 1965, 'Oreficerie Byzantine dimenticate in Italia', in: *Atti del'I Congresso Nazionale di Studi Bizantini. Ravenna, 23-25 Maggio 1965*, Faenza, 81-94.
- Lukomsky, G.K. 1918, *Kratkij catalog museya Alexandrovskogo dvorca I ego istopičeskij očerk*, Petrograd.
- Madox, J. 1834, *Excursions to the Holy Land, Egypt, Nubia, Syria &c.*, London.
- Murav'ev, A.N. 1858, *Snošeniya Rossii s Vostokom po delam čerkovnim*, T. 1, St Petersburg.
- Panchenko, K.A. 2004, 'Rossiya i Antiochijskij patriarchat: nachalo dialoga (seredina XVI – pervaya polovina XVII v.)', in: *Rossiya i Christianskij Vostok*, T. 2-3, 203-221.
- Paul of Aleppo 2005, *Puteshestvie Antiochijskogo patriarcha Makarija v Rossiju v polovine XVII veka, opisannoe ego sinom, archimandritom Pavlom Alepskim. Perevod s arabskogo G. Murkosa*, Moscow.
- Peeters, P. 1906, 'La Légende de Saidnaia', *AnBol* 25, 137-155.
- Pococke, R. 1745, *A Description of the East, and some other Countries*, Vol. II, 1, *Observations on Palaestine or the Holy Land, Syria, Mesopotamia, Cyprus, and Candia*, London.
- Pyatnitsky, Yu. 1999, 'K istorii postupleniya v Ermitag vizantijskogo tripticha iz monastirya Saidanaia', in: *The Hermitage Readings in Memory of V. Levinson-Lessing (1893-1972). Summarized reports*, St Petersburg, 51-54.
- Pyatnitsky, Yu. 2008, 'The Byzantine Enamel Triptych from the Saidnaya Convent in the Hermitage Collection: The Provenance and History of Research', in: *Byzantium within the Context of World Culture: Dedicated to the 100th Anniversary of Alisa Vladimirovna Bank's Birth: 1906-1984. Materials of the Conference*, St Petersburg, 182-203.
- Pyatnitsky, Yu., V. Zournatzis, 'Epitaphios from the Balamand Monastery', forthcoming.
- Soldatova, L.M. 1998, 'Reshenie problem ispol'zovaniya I restavracii Alexandrovskogo dvorca posle Velikoj Otečest-

- vennoj vojni', in: *Alexandrovskij dvorec: Istorija: Vladeľ'ci: Kollekcii: Kratkoe sodержanie dokladov IV Carskosel'skoi naučnoi konferencii*, St Petersburg, 74-77.
- Tsitsiloni, K., L. Mols 1999, 'Icon Restoration at the Convent of Our Lady at Saydnaya, Syria', *ECACME* 2, 49-52.
- Uspensky, F.I. 1902, 'Archeologičeskie pamyatniki Sirii', in: *Izvestiya Russkogo Archeologičeskogo Instituta v Konstantinopole*, T. VII, Sophia, 93-212.
- Uspensky, P. 1894, *Kniga Bitijya moego: Dnevnik i avtobiografičeskie zapiski*, T. 1 (Godi 1841, 1842, 1843 i part 1844 goda), St Petersburg.
- Uspensky, P. 1896, *Kniga Bitijya moego: Dnevnik i avtobiografičeskie zapiski*, T. 3 (Godi 1846, 1847, 1848, 1849 i part 1850 goda), St Petersburg.
- Uspensky, P. 1910, 'Otčet o Sirijskoi pravoslavnoi cerkvi, predstavlenij 15 yanvarya 1847 goda ober-prokuroru Sbyateishego Sinoda grafu N.A. Protasovu', in: *Materiali dlya biographii episkopa Porfiriya Uspenskogo. Tome I. Official'nie dokumenti*. Pod redakciei P.V. Bezobrazova, St Petersburg, 78-181.
- Wright, T. (transl.) 1968, *Early Travels in Palestine: Comprising the Narratives of Arculf, Willibald, Bernard, Sæwulf, Sigurd, Benjamin of Tudela, Sir John Maundeville, De la Brocquière, and Maundrell*, New York.
- Yakovlev, V.I. 1927a, *Alexandrovskij dvorec-musej v Detskom Sele (bivshee žilische Romanovich)*, Detskoe Selo.
- Yakovlev, V.I. 1927b, *Ochрана carskoi residencii*, Detskoe Selo.
- Zavadskaya, L.A. 1998, 'Podnosnie ikoni iz Alexandrovskogo dvorca', in: *Alexandrovskij Dvorec: Istorija: Vladeľ'ci: Kollekcii: Kratkoe sodержanie dokladov IV Carskosel'skoi naučnoi konferencii*, St Petersburg, 50-52.
- Zayat, H. 1932, *Histoire de Saidnaya*, Harissa (in Arabic).
- Zeebout, A. 1998, *Tvoyage van Mher Joos van Ghistele*, ed. R. Gaspar, Hilversum.

*La Transfiguration du Christ, une vision éminente: Représenter Philippe à la place de Jacques à l'église Betä Maryam à Lalibäla en Ethiopie**

Athanassios SEMOGLU

Ce fut le professeur Claude Lepage qui a présenté le premier et étudié systématiquement unes de plus anciennes peintures murales chrétiennes conservées en Ethiopie connues jusqu'à ce jour, celles de l'église monolithe de Betä Maryam sur le célèbre site de Lalibäla¹. Le spécialiste français a posé la base de toute discussion sur les sources et le caractère de ces peintures fort énigmatiques ainsi que sur le rôle du monument dans la capitale du souverain Zagwé Lalibäla qui régna, selon toute probabilité, à la fin du XII^e – début du XIII^e siècle².

Parmi les sujets, celui qui impressionne par son originalité est la Transfiguration du Christ qui décore le haut de la paroi orientale de la nef centrale au-dessus de l'arc triomphal qui conduit au sanctuaire, le *maqdas* éthiopien (Pl. 1)³. Malgré le mauvais état de conservation de la peinture ainsi que son emplacement caché, Claude Lepage a réussi à photographier et étudier la composition. Il s'agit, en effet, d'une Transfiguration qui, dans son aspect général, n'est pas si loin de l'iconographie byzantine traditionnelle. Le Christ est représenté au milieu de deux prophètes, Moïse à gauche et Elie à droite. En bas, sont figurés trois époptes dans des attitudes variées faisant des gestes qui expriment leur surpris et effroi, selon les témoignages des trois évangiles synoptiques (*Mt.* 17. 6, *Mc.* 9. 6, *Lc.* 9. 34).

Toutefois, l'examen attentif relève des particularités iconographiques étonnantes si nombreuses qui rendent la scène originale tout en l'investissant d'un appareil proprement archaïque, voire palestinien; citons-les:

- a. l'absence de l'auréole lumineuse autour du Christ représenté en taille gigantesque,
- b. la mention explicite du mont Thabor près des pieds de Moïse,
- c. la représentation des trois tentes sous la forme d'une triple arcature,
- d. la présence des animaux autour de la scène,

- e. l'emplacement de la composition sur l'arc triomphal près du sanctuaire, détail qui renvoie aux usages paléochrétiens⁴, et
- f. enfin le remplacement de l'apôtre Jacques par Philippe à gauche, au-dessous du prophète Elie, selon l'inscription en caractères éthiopiens «filpos» qui l'accompagne.

Si les quatre premiers éléments iconographiques témoignent d'une conception très particulière de la narration évangélique, la présence extraordinaire de Philippe dans la Transfiguration du Seigneur contredit carrément les données des évangiles. Devant cette anomalie, unique, selon nos connaissances, pour l'histoire de la composition, nous avons voulu rechercher la ou les raisons qui ont provoqué ce remplacement paradoxal.

* L'article fut objet de ma communication au colloque international: *Christian art on the Borderlands of Asia, Africa and Europe*, organisé par la Société polonaise de l'art oriental et qui a eu lieu au monastère des Capucins à Zakroczym en Pologne du 6 au 9 mai 2008. Je remercie mon collègue Waldemar Deluga qui a eu la gentillesse de m'inviter à participer à ce colloque. Cet article doit son existence à mon professeur Claude Lepage qui m'a transmis, avec sa problématique et ses réflexions sur l'art éthiopien, toute une vision globale sur l'art chrétien de la périphérie orientale ainsi que sur les conditions de sa genèse.

¹ Lepage 1999.

² Sur l'argumentation de Lepage pour l'attribution du décor de Betä Maryam au souverain de Lalibäla, Lepage 1999, 963-966. D'après ses remarques faites *in situ*, il estime, en combinaison avec les données d'une source d'un arabe chrétien, que le groupe d'églises d'Emmanuel, de Betä Maryam ainsi que de Golgota Sinai aurait été réalisé par Lalibäla avant 1205 (Lepage 2002, 173). Notons pourtant que sa remarque concerne la construction d'églises et non leur décoration. Sur la vie du négus Lalibäla, voir Gerster 1968, 88-90.

³ Voir le croquis de la situation des peintures murales (Lepage 1999, Fig. 2) et la photo générale de la composition, résultat de la reconstitution à l'ordinateur (Lepage 1999, Fig. 4).

⁴ Pour des exemples dans l'art paléochrétien, Christe 1984, 5. Cf. aussi Grabar 1946, II, 193, n. 2.



Pl. 1. La Transfiguration du Christ; église de Betä Maryam, Lalibäla (d'après Lepage 1999, Fig. 4)

Avant tout, on aurait tort à ranger la Transfiguration de Betä Maryam dans la même catégorie avec les autres Transfigurations dont le caractère historique est mis au point par l'insertion d'un martyr, comme c'est le cas de l'abside de Saint Apollinaire in Classe⁵. En effet, ce genre d'additions ne renverse point la structure élémentaire de la composition et n'altère pas le noyau évangélique de l'épisode. Cette liberté des iconographes de réunir des motifs divers dans un même panneau fut judicieusement interprétée par André Grabar comme un effort de figurer la puissance éternelle triomphante du Seigneur⁶.

⁵ Grabar 1946, II, 194.

⁶ Grabar 1946, II, 194.

⁷ Lepage 1999, 926.

⁸ Lepage 1999, 926-927.

Tout d'abord, il est à noter que le professeur Claude Lepage a avoué, à propos de la présence de Philippe, que 'ses efforts interprétatifs sont demeurés en grande partie infructueux'⁷. Il a, avec raison je crois, écarté l'éventualité d'une erreur du scribe, improbable dans un monument si important. Pour interpréter ce détail insolite, Claude Lepage a donc essayé d'établir des rapports avec une tradition liturgique ancienne à Jérusalem qui a précédé l'établissement de la liturgie officielle à l'époque de Constantin⁸. Cette liturgie des premières communautés chrétiennes de Palestine offrirait ainsi la clef d'interprétation pour un ensemble de détails qui semblent extraordinaires dans la composition: la taille démesurée du Christ (la «taille cosmique»), en tant que trace d'un lointain prototype palestinien; la mention du mont Thabor, localisation non rapportée par les évangélistes, et fixée seulement après la mort de Constantin, alors que certaines

communautés judéo-chrétiennes commémorait l'événement sur le mont des Oliviers⁹; enfin la présence de Philippe parmi les élèves dont le nombre des époptes n'était, peut-être, pas encore fixé¹⁰. Or, selon cette interprétation qui porte sur le flou du nombre des époptes avant même la canonisation des évangiles, le modèle éventuel qui a donné naissance à cette iconographie originale ne pourrait être élaboré que entre le IV^e et le VI^e siècle selon une tradition purement palestinienne¹¹.

En effet, cette hypothèse fascinante dérive d'une propre théorie servant comme un instrument et un outil méthodologique excellent pour l'approche de la question de l'iconographie palestinienne préconstantinienne¹². Néanmoins, jusqu'à la découverte des évidences qui témoigneront de la présence non canonique de Philippe dans la Transfiguration, ce schéma restera purement hypothétique. Rappelons aussi que nous ne disposons pas, pour le moment, de textes ou d'images qui sont en état d'appuyer le rôle de Philippe ou de tout autre apôtre comme épopte de la Transfiguration parmi les trois autres élèves fixes cités par les évangiles¹³.

Il reste alors une troisième explication qui fut écartée sans peine: celle qui s'appuie sur le rôle d'un Philippe dans le baptême de Candace, l'eunuque officier de la reine éthiopienne (*Ac.* 8, 26-40). D'après le Nouveau Testament, il y a deux disciples du Seigneur avec le nom Philippe. Le premier, Apôtre du cercle des Douze (*Mt.* 10, 2-4; *Mc.* 3, 16-19; *Lc.* 6, 14-16, *Ac.* I, 13), alors que le second, l'helléniste, issu du groupe des Sept appelé le diacre (*Ac.* 6, 5). C'est le second qui est qualifié comme évangéliste à cause de son rôle missionnaire en Samarie (*Ac.* 8, 5-13) et du fait qu'il a baptisé l'eunuque éthiopien sur la route de Jérusalem à Gaza¹⁴. Il est de fait que la recherche a rapproché les deux personnages à cause de qualités missionnaires communes¹⁵. En outre, des pères de l'Église tels que Polycrate, évêque d'Ephèse ou Clément d'Alexandrie sont des témoins principaux de cette identification des deux personnages néotestamentaires¹⁶.

Quoi qu'il en soit, il est de fait que la figure de Philippe a subi en même temps un dédoublement dont l'inspireur semble avoir été Luc pour des raisons inconnues et d'un fusionnement soutenu par les Actes apocryphes et diffusé par les premiers pères de l'Église dans un milieu, semble-t-il, très bouleversé¹⁷. Or, il pourrait être très probable que l'inspireur de la peinture de Betä Maryam ne distingue pas, lui aussi, l'apôtre des Douze de l'helléniste des

⁹ Lepage 1998, 774, 776; *idem* 1999, 919.

¹⁰ Lepage 1999, 914-915 (sur la taille cosmique), 918-920 (sur la mention du mont Thabor) et 925-930 (sur la présence de Philippe en tant qu'épopte de la Transfiguration).

¹¹ Lepage 1999, 929. Il est à remarquer que la recherche sur les sources de la Transfiguration s'est déjà prononcée en faveur de son origine juive qui touche à la fête même des Tabernacles ainsi qu'à la cérémonie annuelle de l'intronisation de Yahvé, événement pourvu de connotations eschatologiques. Sur cette théorie, voir la monographie classique de Riesenfeld 1947.

¹² L'axe de cette théorie sur la présence d'une liturgie préconstantinienne génératrice d'une iconographie méconnue est présenté par Lepage 1998.

¹³ Yves Christe relate une composition en mosaïque très mutilée sur le fronton oriental de la cathédrale de Parenzo en Croatie. L'identification de la scène à une Transfiguration est fort problématique du fait que l'une des figures conservées est désignée par une inscription comme celle de l'apôtre André! (Christe 1984, 5, n. 2). En effet, selon le dessin de Carlo de Franceschi conservé à la photothèque Gabriel Millet, à l'EPHE à Paris, l'apôtre André est figuré à pied, à gauche, derrière l'apôtre Pierre et le prophète Moïse. De l'autre côté prennent place le prophète Elie ainsi que trois autres personnages qui sont malheureusement détruits (Bernardi 2005, 327, Fig. 5). S'il s'agit, en effet, d'une Transfiguration, la présence de l'apôtre André parmi les époptes exige une interprétation. Mais encore plus, elle constituerait un précédent à la composition éthiopienne tout en renforçant la théorie de Claude Lepage qui paradoxalement ne relate pas l'exemple en question. Il est intéressant de signaler que sur le fronton occidental de l'église épiscopale c'est le Christ qui est représenté parmi deux archanges (*ibid.*, Figs 24-27). La présence des quatre témoins dans la composition de la Transfiguration fut aussi évoquée par Christe à propos de l'exemple très mutilé de la chapelle San Zeno à Rome (Christe 1984, 9, n. 18). Cette thèse est soutenue à partir de la trace de la main droite levée d'un personnage qui n'est malheureusement pas conservé. Même si nous sommes d'accord avec l'opinion de Christe qui rejette la restitution du dessin de Windsor, selon lequel est représentée une figure en proskynèse derrière le personnage de droite, (le donateur peut-être?), rien n'autoriserait à supposer la présence d'un quatrième 'témoin apostolique'. La recherche sur le flou du nombre des époptes apostoliques dans les compositions de la Transfiguration ainsi que sur leur identité reste ouverte.

¹⁴ Pour cette distinction de deux personnages voir l'introduction des Amsler/Bovon/Bouvier 1996, 15-16.

¹⁵ Amsler/Bovon/Bouvier 1996, 16.

¹⁶ Polycrate procède à l'identification de l'apôtre Philippe avec le père des prophétesses, c'est-à-dire Philippe l'helléniste (*Ac.* 21, 9) en vue d'opposer aux apôtres romains Pierre et Paul les deux asiates, Jean et Philippe (Amsler/Bovon/Bouvier 1996, 19-20). Dans le cadre de sa polémique contre les adeptes de l'encratisme qui condamnent le mariage, Clément d'Alexandrie intégrera dans son argumentation les apôtres Pierre et Philippe qui ont eu des enfants. De cette manière, le grand docteur commet une fusion des deux Philippes (Amsler/Bovon/Bouvier 1996, 21-22).

¹⁷ Sur cette thèse intéressante, voir Czachesz 2002, 137, n. 6.

Actes. Les raisons de cette fusion sont, à notre avis, les mêmes avec celles qui ont conduit au remplacement de l'apôtre Jacques à Philippe dans la composition de la Transfiguration. Recherchons-les.

La réponse à ce remplacement se trouve vraisemblablement dans l'effort systématique de légitimer Philippe, ce qui est pleinement développé dans le texte apocryphe de ses Actes. Cette procédure tient à éliminer toute discrimination à l'égard de Philippe helléniste qui n'avait pas reçu la grâce du Saint Esprit. En bref, selon l'opinion d'Istvan Czachesz, la validité de l'apostolat de Philippe passe par deux voies principales: la première, indirecte, se réalise à travers les grâces des apôtres et principalement de Pierre et Jean tandis que la seconde, directe, passe par la vision immédiate du Christ¹⁸.

Le troisième acte apocryphe s'ouvre avec Philippe qui s'adresse à Pierre et les autres apôtres pour que «ceux-ci qui ont déjà reçu la couronne du Christ dans l'ordre apostolique lui confèrent leur force afin qu'il aille prêcher l'évangile et qu'il soit ainsi mis au nombre de ceux qui partagent la gloire dans les cieux». L'apôtre Jean le rassure que Jésus est avec lui dans sa mission (*Ac. Ph.* III, 1).

Le chapitre suivant du même acte est également éloquent du rôle décisif de Pierre et de Jean pour la légitimité de l'évangéliste des éthiopiens. Philippe supplie Pierre et Jean de prier pour lui afin qu'il accomplisse la mission que le Seigneur lui a confiée. Juste après cet épisode, l'Esprit du Seigneur le remplit de sainte éloquence, nécessaire pour son apostolat (*Ac. Ph.* III, 2). La nécessité du soutien des deux apôtres s'avère alors fondamentale, car, selon les Actes canoniques, Philippe l'helléniste n'avait pas reçu le saint Esprit à Jérusalem comme les autres disciples (*Ac.* 2.1-4). Dans cette logique s'inscrit d'ailleurs l'envoi par les apôtres à la ville de

Samarie de Pierre et de Jean pour conférer le Saint-Esprit aux nouveaux chrétiens baptisés par Philippe (*Ac.* 8, 14-27).

Passons maintenant à la seconde voie de la validité de la mission évangélique de Philippe réalisée grâce à sa vision directe de Dieu. Cette version qui consiste à apaiser les tensions parmi les différents groupes chrétiens représentés chacun par un apôtre, constitue, selon Czachesz, une manière de démocratiser l'hierarchie de l'église tout en établissant une égalité parfaite parmi les apôtres¹⁹. L'autorité de Philippe ne dépend plus de la grâce de Pierre et de Jean à cause de son expérience personnelle du contact avec Dieu à travers ses nombreuses visions. Son pouvoir d'être épopte d'une théophanie le rend ainsi équivalent aux autres disciples. Parmi les nombreuses théophanies, la vision principale qui est amplement décrite dans le troisième acte revêt d'une importance significative pour la meilleure compréhension de l'exemple de Betä Maryam.

En route pour le pays des Candaces, l'ancienne Ethiopie, Philippe s'arrête sur un lieu désert pour demander au Seigneur de lui apparaître (*Ac. Ph.* III, 5). Les éditeurs des Actes apocryphes de Philippe estiment, à raison, que ce lieu ne pourrait être autre que le Sinaï, le site par excellence où Dieu se révèle²⁰. En principe, ses arguments sont centrés sur les nombreuses réminiscences de l'Exode dans le texte apocryphe: l'arbre sous lequel Philippe s'assoie et les pains qu'il mange là rappellent l'arbre que le Seigneur indique à Moïse et la manne; l'apparition du grand aigle dans le désert est également une transposition d'Exode (19. 4) et de Deutéronome (32. 11). En situant alors implicitement cette première apparition du Christ au Sinaï, l'auteur des Actes apocryphes ne fait qu'authentifier la vision de Philippe tout en validant son apostolat.

Dans la composition du monument éthiopien, Philippe participe également à une vision de Dieu comme un épopte parmi les deux apôtres Pierre et Jean. Selon le texte apocryphe, Philippe a l'expérience de l'épiphanie divine au Sinaï, lieu de vision aussi bien du prophète Moïse que d'Elie (*I Rois*, 19, 4-7). En effet, le troisième Acte de Philippe est riche de références vétérotestamentaires aux deux prophètes ainsi qu'à leur contact avec Dieu au Horeb. La vision alors de Philippe sur le mont Sinaï offrirait le fonds nécessaire pour une comparaison avec la vision évangélique de la Transfiguration sur le mont Thabor. C'est dans ce cas que la mention explicite du nom de Thabor se trouve justifiée²¹ écartant les

¹⁸ Czachesz 2002, 137, 139-140.

¹⁹ Czachesz 2002, 139.

²⁰ Amsler/Bovon/Bouvier 1996, 42.

²¹ Selon une autre interprétation que nous sommes également en état de proposer, cette mention explicite du mont Thabor dans la composition éthiopienne pourrait suggérer des inspirations des Ménologes syriaques en principe qui ont constamment insisté sur la mention du mont de la Transfiguration (Aubineau 1967, 424) probablement en souvenir de la célébration de l'anniversaire de la dédicace des trois basiliques édifiées sur le mont de la théophanie (Baumstark 1910, 261). Il est à noter que dans le synaxaire éthiopien, la lecture de la fête de la Transfiguration, qui est célébrée

malentendus qui résulteraient éventuellement de cette lecture parallèle ou mieux comparée de la composition²². La vision de Betä Maryam fonctionnerait ainsi comme une Transfiguration classique, mais en même temps elle illustrerait l'apparition du Seigneur à Philippe au Sinaï. Rappelons que les interférences entre les deux lieux divins, le mont de la Transfiguration et le mont Horeb de la vision du prophète Moïse apparaissent déjà dans l'iconographie – modèle de la composition absidale justinienne du Monastère de Sinaï²³. Selon, d'ailleurs, l'interprétation des Coleman et Elsner, la Transfiguration de Sinaï réunit les apôtres, les prophètes et le Christ comme si tous se trouvèrent au sommet du mont Thabor et participèrent à l'expérience extraordinaire de la théophanie²⁴.

En plus, le caractère «sinaïte» de la composition éthiopienne semble être appuyé sur un élément architectural, dont le symbolisme sacré se conjugue avec celle-ci: il s'agit du pilier insolite voilé d'étoffes au milieu de la nef et de l'entrée du sanctuaire qui cache en partie la vue vers la Transfiguration²⁵. Ce pilier appelé par les Ethiopiens pilier de l'unité ou pilier de lumière existe aussi dans le saint des saints du complexe sanctuaire voisin de Betä Maryam portant le nom de Sinaï²⁶.

En outre, cette lecture parallèle de la vision apocryphe avec celle des évangiles s'avère cohérente avec la participation des trois époptes, Pierre, Jean, et Philippe. Si la vision au Sinaï garantit l'apostolat de Philippe et établit une égalité parmi les apôtres, son droit d'être sur le Thabor est également valable et absolu. En d'autres termes, puisque la grâce divine lui a été conférée par Pierre et Jean, selon les actes apocryphes de Philippe, leur coprésence fonctionnerait comme une validation supplémentaire du rôle missionnaire de Philippe. Les raisons seraient bien évidentes surtout dans un monument éthiopien dont la réalisation est attribuée par la tradition au négus Lalibäla²⁷. Le fait que Philippe est figuré avec l'apôtre Jean dans un même tableau constituerait vraisemblablement une référence visuelle à l'épisode, suivant lequel Jean est désigné par Philippe dans les Actes apocryphes (III. 2) comme «frère et compagnon dans l'apostolat», ce qui associe Philippe au cercle des Douze²⁸.

Or, Philippe prend la place de Jacques parmi les deux apôtres fixes, Pierre et Jean. Vu leur importance majeure, ces deux apôtres sont constamment mis en relief dans la peinture nubienne, comme le démontrent les exemples de la cathédrale de Faras

(moitié du IX^e siècle)²⁹ ainsi que de la chapelle III de Banganarti au Soudan (après XI^e siècle)³⁰. Magdalena Łaptas suppose que leur mission en Samarie rapportée dans les Actes des Apôtres a très probablement dicté leur choix dans la cathédrale de Faras.

Mais quel pourrait être le rôle des animaux qui encadrent la scène? Tout paradoxalement, une girafe gigantesque prend place derrière le prophète Elie et le groupe des Jean et Philippe. De l'autre côté, et derrière Moïse, est représenté un oiseau, peut-être un corbeau, et plus bas se déroule un combat avec un léopard qui agresse une gazelle³¹.

au 13 du mois Nahasē et correspond au 19 août, contient une salutation au mont Thabor (Guidi/Grébaut 1913, 309). Toutefois, cette interprétation qui serait aussi en accord parfait avec le détail des trois tentes figurées, de manière exceptionnelle, sous la forme des tables d'un canon ne saurait pas expliquer l'ensemble des particularités iconographiques réunies dans la composition de l'église mariale éthiopienne.

²² Sur la technique d'interprétation de cette iconographie et ses niveaux multidimensionnels, voir Maguire 1988.

²³ La bibliographie sur les diverses interprétations à propos de la juxtaposition de la Transfiguration et les scènes des visions du prophète Moïse au-dessus de l'arc est riche. Pour un aperçu, cf. Miziolek 1990, 44, n. 6. La comparaison des visions au Sinaï et au Thabor fut aussi énoncée dans une homélie en arabe, composée par l'higoumène du monastère au Sinaï, Anastase, vécu à la seconde moitié du VII^e siècle (Lepage 1999, 921, n. 68). Cf. aussi les opinions d'Andreas Andreopoulos qui voit dans la composition du Sinaï un effort de la part de l'inspirateur du schéma d'harmoniser les deux Testaments (Andreopoulos 2005, 137).

²⁴ Coleman/Elsner 1994, 81-82. Selon cette interprétation, les images du Sinaï fonctionnent comme une topographie sacrée tout en impliquant 'une idéologie d'intégration' pour tout pèlerin qui, grâce à son voyage et ses efforts, gagne son droit de participer, comme l'ensemble des apôtres et des prophètes, à la manifestation divine de la Transfiguration: une récompense dans un univers de 'réalité digitale' visant à une réalisation imaginaire.

²⁵ Lepage 1999, Fig. 3.

²⁶ Lepage 1999, 965-966.

²⁷ Gerster 1968, 92 et 95-97.

²⁸ Amsler/Bovon/Bouvier 1996, 123, n. 126.

²⁹ Les deux apôtres sont représentés à pied et dans une attitude frontale sur le mur nord de la nef nord de la cathédrale de Faras. Ils sont actuellement exposés dans la Galerie de Faras du Musée national de Varsovie (Michalowski 1974, 105-107, Pl. 11; Mierzejewska 2005, Fig. 5). Je tiens à remercier la collègue Magdalena Łaptas de m'avoir signalé ce détail intéressant et de m'avoir fait connaître les résultats de son travail.

³⁰ Zurawski 2003, 244, Fig. 7. Pour l'identification des deux apôtres, voir l'étude sous presse de Łaptas 2008, Fig. 7.

³¹ Lepage 1999, 916, 922.

Il est certain que les animaux qui environnent la composition ne veulent pas désigner le paysage désertique du sommet du mont. L'intérêt, d'ailleurs, du peintre pour donner l'impression du paysage manque totalement. Est-ce que la présence de ces animaux reflète simplement la volonté générale d'environner tous les personnages du décor de l'église par les figurations animalières³²? Je ne pense pas. Le répertoire animalier, assez riche dans le monument, s'organise sur des registres et il est pourvu d'un caractère purement ornemental, comme nous le montre la frise sur la paroi ouest de la nef nord³³.

Au contraire, l'exemple de la Transfiguration de l'église mariale est, sans doute, un cas à part. Les animaux, dotés d'un rôle proprement fonctionnel, participent à la scène se dirigeant vers les personnages principaux. La présence du corbeau serait, par exemple, parfaitement compatible si celui-ci accompagnait le prophète Elie, qui est cependant figuré de l'autre côté. Dans ce cas, il aurait été une référence à l'épisode, suivant lequel le prophète a été nourri dans le désert par le corbeau (*I Rois* 17, 6). A ce propos, Lepage a intelligemment soupçonné une inversion de la place entre les deux prophètes³⁴. La place inverse des deux prophètes dans les mosaïques de l'abside du Sinaï corrobore son hypothèse³⁵. Mais si cette hypothèse est valable, quelles pourraient être les motivations de cette inversion? Pour y répondre, passons à l'examen de la représentation des autres animaux.

La girafe, à droite, qui est peinte en taille gigantesque est, en effet, un animal très rare même en Ethiopie qui faisait partie avec les éléphants des cadeaux royaux des rois éthiopiens au sultan et au patriarche d'Egypte³⁶. Elle constituait un attribut royal constant et un symbole de pouvoir par excellence³⁷. Il suffit de citer l'exemple de Jules César qui, après sa campagne militaire en Afrique, a célébré en 46 avant J.-C. son retour triomphal à Rome à travers la parade d'une girafe³⁸. De même, une girafe accompagnera, comme symbole de pouvoir, le portrait de Lorenzo di Piero de Medici peint par Giorgio Vasari pour les appartements du Duke Cosimo I^{er} au palais de Vecchio en Florence vers 1555³⁹.

Or, la girafe représentée à Betä Maryam dans une taille impressionnante, presque égale à celle du Christ, pourrait s'offrir comme le symbole par excellence du pouvoir royal du donateur du monument Ethiopien. Une présence allusive du roi – donateur dans la plus importante vision néotestamentaire serait alors fort probable si on tient compte, parmi d'autres, la prédilection que le roi témoigna pour ce monument illustre⁴⁰. En outre, la tradition, rapportée par Jules Leroy⁴¹, attribue le caractère sacré du pilier devant la composition au fait que ce pilier aurait reçu l'empreinte de la main du Christ au cours d'une vision accordée au roi Lalibäla. Cette tradition renforce notre argument tout en confirmant l'attribution des peintures de Betä Maryam au règne du roi Lalibäla, vers 1200. Une telle considération mettrait alors le roi Lalibäla avec Philippe ensemble parmi les époptes de la Transfiguration sur le mont Thabor. Si notre proposition est valable, il serait facile à saisir les raisons de l'alignement de la girafe royale avec Philippe, l'évangéliste des Éthiopiens, et avec Elie, le prophète protecteur de la dynastie Macédonienne à Byzance et garant d'apothéose impériale⁴². Les analogies, d'ailleurs, entre les deux dynasties, les Zagwé en Ethiopie et les Macédoniens à Byzance en ce qui concerne la question de leur légitimité autorisent un tel rapprochement⁴³.

En fait, nous ne pourrions pas exclure, au contraire nous pourrions à raison attribuer cette fonction particulière d'Elie comme protecteur de la famille impériale à une influence de la cour byzantine. Ce propos semble être valable d'autant plus qu'en 1202-1203, le roi Lalibäla, sous le titre du «roi de Nubie», vient en pèlerinage à Constantinople après avoir visité Jérusalem, selon les rapports

³² Lepage 1999, 922.

³³ Lepage 1999, Fig. 21.

³⁴ Lepage 1999, 916.

³⁵ Weitzmann/Forsyth 1965, Pl. CIII.

³⁶ Lepage 1999, 923.

³⁷ Bien que le professeur Lepage remarque le caractère royal de la girafe, néanmoins, il ne la met pas en rapport direct avec le roi même Lalibäla ainsi qu'avec la composition de la Transfiguration (Lepage 1999, 924).

³⁸ Loost-Gaugier 1987, 94-95.

³⁹ Loost-Gaugier 1987, Pl. 1.

⁴⁰ Le roi entend la messe chaque jour et parfois avec les membres de sa famille occupe la loge creusée dans le mur ouest de la cour, en face de l'entrée de l'église mariale (Gerster 1968, 95).

⁴¹ Leroy 1973, 133. L'information est relevée par l'article de Lepage 1999, 906.

⁴² Sur la prédilection de la dynastie macédonienne à Byzance pour le prophète Elie, voir Dagron 1996, 204-205.

⁴³ Pour la question de la légitimité dynastique des Zagwé vis-à-vis de la dynastie salomonienne aksumite, voir Gerster 1968, 90; pour les Macédoniens à Byzance, voir Dagron 1996, 54-70.

du chroniqueur Robert de Clari⁴⁴. Cette visite ne témoigne pas seulement de rapports continués entre Byzance et les monophysites africains mais elle trahit aussi la fascination exercée de Constantinople et la place que Byzance occupait dans la conscience des rois de la périphérie de l'Orient chrétien⁴⁵.

D'un autre point de vue, il faudrait aussi ajouter la fonction d'Elie comme Précurseur de la Seconde Parousie, sujet particulièrement familier, semble-t-il, aux communautés monastiques et son importance pour ses pouvoirs super naturels sur la pluie et le feu⁴⁶; ceux-ci ne pourraient être que des armes efficaces pour tout roi puissant surtout en Éthiopie⁴⁷.

Nous avons laissé dernier l'épisode du léopard qui agresse une gazelle ou une antilope à gauche. L'inspiration de cet épisode est à rechercher dans le huitième Acte apocryphe de l'apôtre. Lors d'un voyage vers Ophiorymé, ville identifiée par la recherche à l'Hiérapolis en Phrygie⁴⁸, les apôtres Philippe, Marianne et Barthélemy étaient assaillis par un grand léopard qui leur décrit l'adoucissement de sa sauvagerie, alors qu'il était prêt à dévorer un chevreau. Les deux bêtes se mettent à croire en Jésus et à parler comme des hommes (*Ac. Ph.* VIII, 16-18). La fin du voyage s'achève dans le douzième acte avec l'épisode exceptionnel de la communion des bêtes au Christ en rite d'aspersion comme un exorcisme de la bestialité démoniaque (*Ac. Ph.* XII, 8). Les éditeurs des Actes apocryphes arrivent au point de supposer que le dixième Acte perdu ou probablement censuré relatait le baptême des deux quadrupèdes⁴⁹! Est-ce que cet épisode extraordinaire, aux connotations eucharistiques évidentes⁵⁰, trahirait en plus une allusion à une mission d'évangélisation éventuelle assumée par le roi Lalibäla dont la vie est assimilée au Christ⁵¹?

En somme, nous considérons que la scène de la Transfiguration à Betä Maryam prend l'aspect et le caractère d'une donation proprement royale. Son iconographie est unique et très inspirée trahissant son substrat archaïque. Malgré l'image assez obscure de la recherche actuelle sur les origines, les sources, l'ancienneté et le caractère précis de la fête de la Transfiguration⁵², nous sommes en état d'aboutir à certaines remarques valables à propos de la composition de l'église mariale de Lalibäla. La fusion de la vision de Philippe au Sinaï dans l'épiphanie divine de la Transfiguration au Thabor sert à relever la légitimité de l'apostolat de l'évangéliste des Éthiopiens tout en validant parallèlement le pouvoir sacré du roi donateur. Certes ce ne pourrait être que le

plan du roi Zagwé Lalibäla, conscient de sa mission divine de la création d'une nouvelle Jérusalem dans le roc de Roha en Éthiopie⁵³.

A la fin, ce schéma interprétatif que nous proposons vient éclairer l'identité du donateur ainsi que la datation du décor dans le règne du saint roi Lalibäla⁵⁴. Pour clore, nous voulons proposer comme hypothèse de travail que pour la conception et la réalisation d'une telle iconographie si complexe et savante, une coordination avec le métropolite éthiopien désigné par le patriarche d'Égypte nous semblerait fort probable. L'arrivée en 1205 du nouveau métropolite, Mika'el, bâtisseur enthousiaste et doué ainsi que favorable aux projets de son roi rendrait encore plus évidente l'hypothèse de sa participation sur l'orchestration et l'organisation perspicace du programme iconographique de ce monument exceptionnel tout en fixant automatiquement un terminus post quem pour l'exécution de son décor⁵⁵.

⁴⁴ Hendrickx 1985.

⁴⁵ Les images, par exemple, des rois donateurs de la cathédrale de Faras sont de bons indices de l'influence que la cour byzantine a exercée sur la Nubie voisine d'Éthiopie. Voir l'article excellent de Mierzejewska 2000.

⁴⁶ Sur le rôle du prophète Elie dans la Transfiguration, voir Milner 1997. Le rôle du prophète Elie comme faiseur de la pluie fut la cause de la célébration d'une fête au début du mois de septembre au monastère athonite d'Iviron pendant le XI^e siècle (Garitte 1958, 321).

⁴⁷ Remarquons à ce propos l'intérêt exceptionnel du roi Lalibäla pour la construction des installations hydrauliques afin de retenir l'eau à des fins variées (Lepage 2002, 141-149).

⁴⁸ Amsler/Bovon/Bouvier 1996, 69.

⁴⁹ Amsler/Bovon/Bouvier 1996, 203, n. 447.

⁵⁰ Semoglou 2009.

⁵¹ Gerster 1968, 89.

⁵² Quoique déjà ancienne de quarante ans, la mise au point de M. Aubineau sur la recherche autour de la Transfiguration est toujours actuelle et intéressante (Aubineau 1967, 422-427).

⁵³ Gerster 1968, 89 et 91. Voir aussi Heldman 1992, 230 et suiv.

⁵⁴ C'est le 12^e Sanë (6 juin) dans le synaxaire éthiopien, le jour de la commémoration du roi Lalibäla (Guidi 1904, 600-602).

⁵⁵ Sur l'activité riche de ce métropolite à Lalibäla entre 1205, année de son arrivée à la capitale après sa désignation par le patriarche d'Égypte, et 1210, année de sa fuite en Égypte, voir Lepage 2002, 167-174. Il mérite de signaler, à ce propos, l'information rapportée par G. Gerster, selon laquelle un voyageur du dix-neuvième siècle, A. Raffray a prétendu avoir vu un manuscrit qui racontait la venue des artisans d'Alexandrie et de Jérusalem engagés par le roi Lalibäla pour travailler aux églises monolithiques (Gerster 1968, 91). La thèse de participation des peintres coptes ou des artistes formés en Égypte à l'église mariale de Betä Maryam pourrait

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

- Amsler F., F. Bovon, B. Bouvier (eds) 1996, *Actes de l'apôtre Philippe*, Turnhout (Apocryphes. Collection de poches de l'AEELAC 8).
- Andreopoulos, A. 2005, *Metamorphosis. The Transfiguration in Byzantine Theology and Iconography*, New York.
- Aubineau, M. 1967, 'Une homélie grecque inédite sur la Transfiguration', *AnBol* 85, 401-427.
- Baumstark A. 1910, *Festbrevier und Kirchenjahr der syrischen Jakobiten*, Paderborn.
- Bernardi, G. 2005, *I mosaici della basilica Eufrasiana di Parenzo. Documenti per la storia dei restauri (1826-1916)*, Rovigno/Trieste (Collana degli atti N. 24).
- Christe, Y. 1984, 'Notes iconographiques sur quelques églises de Cappadoce', *Zograf* 15, 5-14.
- Coleman, S., J. Elsner 1994, 'The Pilgrim's Progress: Art, Architecture and Ritual Movement at Sinai', *World Archaeology* 26.1. *Archaeology of Pilgrimage*, 73-89.
- Czachesz, I. 2002, *Apostolic Commission Narratives in the Canonical and Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles*, Groningen.
- Dagron, G. 1996, *Empereur et prêtre. Étude sur le 'césaropapisme' byzantin*, Paris.
- Garitte, G. 1958, *Le calendrier palestino-géorgien du Sinaiticus 34 (X^e siècle)*, Bruxelles (Subsidia hagiographica 30).
- Gerster, G. 1968, *L'art éthiopien. Eglises rupestres*, Paris.
- Grabar, A. 1946, *Martyrium: Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique*, 2 vols, Paris.
- Guidi, Ign. 1904, 'Le synaxaire éthiopien. Les mois de Sanê, Hamlê et Nahasê. I. Mois de Sanê', *PO* 1, fasc. 4.IV.
- Guidi, Ign., S. Grébaud 1913, 'Le synaxaire éthiopien. Le mois de Sanê, Hamlê, Nahasê et Pâguemên publiés et traduits. III. Mois de Nahasê et de Pâguemên', 239-487 (*PO* 9, fasc. 4).
- Heldman, M.E. 1992, 'Architectural Symbolism, Sacred Geography and the Ethiopian Church', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 22.3 (August), 222-241.
- Hendrickx, B. 1985, 'Un roi africain à Constantinople en 1203', *Byzantina* 13, 2, Δώραμα στον Ιωάννη Καραγιαννόπουλο, 893-898.
- Łaptas, M. (2008), 'Saint Andrew the Apostle in the Murals of the Upper Church in Banganarti', *Études et Travaux* 22, sous presse.
- Lepage, Cl. 1998, 'Première iconographie chrétienne de Palestine: controverses anciennes et perspectives à la lumière des liturgies et monuments éthiopiens', *CRAI* (juillet-octobre), 739-782.
- Lepage, Cl. 1999, 'Les peintures murales de l'église Betä Maryam à Lalibela, Éthiopie (Rapport préliminaire)', *CRAI* (juillet-octobre), 901-967.
- Lepage, Cl. 2002, 'Un métropolitain bâtisseur à Lalibäla (Éthiopie) entre 1205 et 1210', *CRAI* (janvier-mars), 141-174.
- Lepage, Cl., G. Hélias, J. Mercier 2001, 'Peintures murales du XII^e siècle découvertes dans l'église Yemrehana Krestos en Éthiopie', *CRAI* (janvier-mars), 311-334.
- Leroy, J. 1973, *L'Éthiopie. Archéologie et culture*, Paris.
- Loost-Gaugier, Chr.L. 1987, 'Lorenzo the Magnificent and the Giraffe as a Symbol of Power', *Artibus et Historiae* 8 #.16, 91-99.
- Maguire, H. 1988, 'The Art of Comparing in Byzantium', *ArtB* 70, 88-103.
- Michalowski, K. 1974, *Faras: die Wandbilder in den Sammlungen des Nationalmuseums zu Warschau*, Warschau.
- Mierzejewska, B. 2000, 'Nubian Imagines Potestatis in the Collections of the National Museum in Warsaw', *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie* XLI, 1-4, 11-24.
- Mierzejewska, B. 2005, *Faras Gallery. The Professor Kazimierz Michalowski Faras Gallery*, Warsaw.
- Milner, Chr. 1997, 'The Role of the Prophet Elijah in the Transfiguration Mosaics at Sinai and Classe', *BF* 24, 207-217.
- Miziolek, J. 1990, 'Transfiguratio Domini in the Apse at Mount Sinai and the Symbolism of Light', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 53, 42-60.
- Riesenfeld, H. 1947, *Jésus Transfiguré. L'arrière-plan du récit évangélique de la Transfiguration*, Copenhagen/Lund (Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis XVI).
- Semoglou, A. 2009, 'Le combat des animaux dans le décor religieux à Byzance après l'iconoclasme et sa référence eucharistique', *Ikon* 2, 117-126.
- Weitzmann, K., G.H. Forsyth 1965, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. The Church and Fortress of Justinian*, Ann Arbor.
- Zurawski, B. 2003, 'Dongola Reach. The Southern Dongola Reach Survey Project, 2002', *PAM* XIV, 237-252.

également être appuyée, à notre avis, sur le décor d'un autre monument royal éthiopien: celui de l'église Yemrehana Krestos dans les montagnes du Lasta, probablement mausolée du roi homonyme (daté avant le dernier quart du XII^e siècle) (Lepage/Hélias/Mercier 2001, 332-333).

A Syriac Glorification of the Virgin: Preliminary Remarks on The Mother and Child Enthroned in London Add. 7170 and Vatican Syr. 559

Rima E. SMINE

INTRODUCTION

The abundance of illuminations in the two Syrian Orthodox lectionaries Vatican Syr. 559 (54 images) and British Library Add. 7170 (48 images) places them at the forefront of the flowering of Syrian Orthodox Art during the so-called Syriac Renaissance of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries¹. Hugo Buchthal, Guillaume de Jerphanion and Jules Leroy were the first scholars to publish the miniatures, providing the groundwork for further investigations². To this day, their publications serve as the main references on this subject, laying the foundation for more investigation on the process of manuscript creation and artistic collaboration.

Both manuscripts belong to the early thirteenth century³ and follow the same liturgical calendar, for which the images serve as illustrations of text or feast. Since the colophon of the Vatican manuscript indicates the Monastery of Mar Mattai, near Mosul as its recipient, scholars have attributed its production to the same monastery. The concise wording of the colophon in the London manuscript did not include a location causing Leroy to attribute its production to a monastery near Mardin known today as Deir es-Za'faran⁴. Buchthal is the only one to recognize that the shared iconographic program indicates a single workshop which he attributes to the Monastery of Mar Mattai⁵. My research on the two manuscripts shifts the attribution of this workshop to the city of Mosul, where a group of artists led by one master appears to have collaborated⁶.

The narrative cycle of both manuscripts derives primarily from the life of Christ as described in the Gospels. Covering a wide range of subjects from the Infancy to the Passion, passing through the miracles, there is no doubt that Christ performs the title role of this narrative, as he appears in almost all the images, to the exception of a few. Because of the narrative aspect of the imagery, in most

instances, these images involve some movement and gesturing on the part of their characters: they are sitting, standing, in prayer, addressing one another, etc.... From the beginning of the manuscripts, we see a constant interaction between the characters in their attitudes. The pauses they take project the idea of an ongoing story with personages who are fully alive.

In addition to fulfilling the purpose of the Gospel books to tell the story of the life of Christ, the two manuscripts, being lectionaries, provide the Syrian Orthodox Church calendar for the reader interested in following the liturgical year with celebrations independent from the life of Christ. As a result, some images appear to be separate from this cycle and follow different needs in the text, and other characters appear in supporting roles, because of the celebrations associated with them during the time of the year. These images can be active, performing a specific task, or in a static pause. In the active category, we can place the Consecration of the Church and the Dormition, whereas Constantine and Helena Holding the True Cross and the Four (anonymous) Monks are clearly hieratic. They respond to a need in the calendar that is independent from any narrative in the Gospels.

Another example of a hieratic and devotional representation is the image of the Mother and Child Enthroned (London: Pl. 1; Vatican: Pl. 2),

¹ Buchthal 1939, 136-150; De Jerphanion 1940; Leroy 1964; *idem* 1971, 253-254.

² Buchthal 1939, 136-150; De Jerphanion 1940; Leroy 1964.

³ The questions about the Vatican date raised by Fiey (1975, 59-68) are examined in great detail in my dissertation (Smine forthcoming).

⁴ Leroy 1964, 313.

⁵ Buchthal 1939, 136-150.

⁶ Smine forthcoming, Ch. 3: The Workshop. For the art of Mosul, see Snelders forthcoming.



Pl. 1. *Mother and Child Enthroned*; British Library Add. 7170, fol. 24r (By Permission of the British Library)



Pl. 2. *Mother and Child Enthroned*; Vatican Syr. 559, fol. 17r (Courtesy of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana)

found in both manuscripts a few pages after the image and readings for the Nativity. De Jerphanion calls it the Mother of God and indicates that it illustrates the Adoration of the Shepherds from Luke's Gospel for the vespers in memory of Mary, without further discussion⁷. This identification is problematic for many reasons. The position of the Mother and Child on a throne clearly solicits reverence and adoration but the previous appearance of the shepherds documented with a Syriac inscription is clearly observed in the preceding Nativity. Thus, their absence in this image makes such an interpretation implausible. Leroy describes the image in the Vatican volume as the Virgin in Majesty without explanation⁸. In his list of illuminations from the London manuscript, he includes fol. 24r as: 'la Vierge, ou plutôt LA MÈRE DE DIEU, YLDT 'LH', sur un trône richement paré'⁹, without further description or identification.

Remembering the function of Vatican Syr. 559 and British Library Add. 7170 as lectionaries, we need to reconsider the choice of such an image within the liturgical calendar and the particular celebration it aims to illustrate. Therefore, we cannot limit our study to the reading that it 'illustrates' but rather to the collection of readings (vespers, matins and liturgy) for the feast day that it represents. Looking at it from the point of view of the Syrian Orthodox lectionary, and considering the sources for the representation, we might reach an interpretation that is more in line with the intended purpose of the artist in placing this image at this point in the readings and in the year. To do so, we need to examine the texts around the image and the specific celebration during which they are read. Once we relate the feast to a Syrian Orthodox interpretation

of the image, we can better understand the purpose that it serves. The purpose of this paper is to present the image of the Enthroned Mother and Child from the Syrian Orthodox point of view and to give the correct identification as prescribed by the readings. It aims to explain the presence of this devotional image in this specific place in the Syrian Orthodox lectionary cycle, by showing its association with similar Byzantine images, and as a result the process by which it was included. The presence of a devotional image within the context of a narrative passage will appear less intriguing.

DESCRIPTION

The London image (Pl. 1) has the title of Mother of God ܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܠܬܐ vertically inscribed on either side of Mary's head: to the left, 'Mother' and to the right, 'God'. The Vatican image (Pl. 2) has no inscription identifying the Mother of God. Instead, it is located at the top of the page following a single line in red. This line, ܠܒܝܢ ܠܠܐ ܠܠܝܢ, 'vespers according to Harclean Luke', introduces the text and is in fact a continuation of the red title from the facing fol. 16v: ܠܒܝܢ ܠܠܐ ܠܠܝܢ, 'the memory of Mary'.

The two images follow the same preliminary drawing and theme established by the draughtsman as we can see in the underlying drawing of the Vatican image. The finishing touches differentiate one image from the other, since the London volume exhibits a higher artistic quality than the Vatican one, which uses thinner paint¹⁰.

The layout for this image in both manuscripts is the same as witnessed in the underlying drawing that we can see in the Vatican version. It represents the Mother and Child Enthroned, and the gesture of the Virgin with her right hand towards Christ identifies her as a Hodegetria type. A reserved and secluded place sets the stage for this representation because the artist stressed the exclusivity of the location in the spatial representation of the three-lobed arch, placing the figures in its centre. In both, the background is supposed to be gold, and whereas it appears dull in the London image, in the Vatican it is almost transparent with no hint of metallic luster. Spade and scrolls decorate the spandrels. There, the London image has fine line drawings in burgundy red over bright yellow whereas the Vatican scrolls and spade are applied thickly in

⁷ De Jerphanion 1940, 15, 75.

⁸ Leroy 1964, 283.

⁹ Leroy 1964, 304.

¹⁰ The division of artistic labour between craftsmen meant that a draughtsman established the first drawing, followed by the artist responsible for applying the paint. Both Leroy (1964, 300) and De Jerphanion (1940, 22-24) remarked on the lesser capabilities of the Vatican painter. In the case of the London manuscript, the precision in the execution of the final touches indicates the work of the master artist images, while the Vatican ones were the work of a lesser skilled artist or even an apprentice. The use of thin paint in the Vatican images indicates a need for economy and might reflect on the level of patronage. For a detailed study of the artistic contribution to the making of both manuscripts, see Smine forthcoming, Ch. 3: The Workshop.

white and blue over light purple. To make up for the lack of refinement, the Vatican artist added a few architectural elements: first, he placed a system of crenellation to the rooftop, made of open lotus flowers in alternating colours from green, red, lilac and pink¹¹. Second, he included supporting columns and capitals for the arch in a dark green colour.

Elaborate decorations adorn the two thrones using the same colours in both images. The green backrest has interlocking tiles in the London image and eight-pointed stars in the Vatican image and the pedestal has red cross-shaped tiles for the Vatican image and a scroll for the London one. In the London image, the back displays a golden border and golden protruding angles whereas the back of the Vatican image represents only the protruding angles. This treatment of the throne is similar to the throne of Caiaphas the High Priest in the upper image of fol. 133r in the Vatican manuscript and on fol. 145r of the London manuscript¹². The scroll motif on the London throne also reappears in the throne of Caiaphas in the same manuscript.

The backrest and the base are separated by a cylindrical cushion providing a comfortable seat for the Virgin. In the London version, it is yellow with the tips decorated in the burgundy red, both colours having been used for the decoration of the spandrels. The Vatican version has a cushion of purple and blue, but the tips are left unfinished with the line drawing showing underneath the thin layer of gold paint. A rug or blanket covers the cushion in the London image whereas in the Vatican copy, it appears under it, as if it was an afterthought on the part of the artist. The London rug is yellow in the centre and has dark purple borders with white fringes. The Vatican rug is purple on the inside with a golden band on the border.

The artists in both manuscripts added a touch of nature with the inclusion of flowers and plants on the sides of the thrones. In the Vatican manuscript, the drawing of two leafy plants appears under the light layer of beige colour that is supposed to be gold. The painter simply added a stroke of green without paying attention to whether the colour went inside the leaves and he covered the foreground with stylized grass. In contrast, the London artist let the throne rest on the base of the image and meticulously painted the flowers on either side of the Mother and Child. Furthermore, he made a plant flower from either side of the cushion on

which the Virgin is sitting. For the leaves, he used different shades of green. On the left side, he created an illusion of multicolored flowers, with outer petals of light blue and white and flaming red for the inner one, while on the right, he reversed the colours.

In both copies, the Virgin Mary wears a blue tunic with a maroon cloak. The London Mary has a cross inscribed on the forehead of her veil while the Vatican one is plain. Attention to details in the London image can appear in the tracing of the cloth folds in the dresses, represented in different colours and many lines: dark for the larger folds, radiating white rays over the blue, and ochre over the maroon, for the smaller folds. The London Christ Child wears a blue tunic like his mother but his cloak is purple, whereas the Vatican Christ wears a green tunic under a dark pink cloak. The facial features of the Vatican Mother and Child are damaged. The London Mother and Child share the features seen throughout the manuscript, with almond eyes meticulously drawn and facial lines in lighter skin colour. They gaze at each other, mindless of the viewer. The haloes of both images of Christ are inscribed with a coloured cross and here again we see the superior artistic quality of the London image, because the artist applied the paint with precision, creating a flame like effect. From the base of each arm of the cross, the colour starts in almost white, to light pink, then purple, and finally into two shades of red: first vermillion followed by carmine red. The artist used this type of flaming cross for Christ throughout the two manuscripts. This method of gradual development of the colour from dark to lighter appears typical of the application of colour in both manuscripts.

The careless rendering of the Vatican Christ shows him as a flat and stiff figure floating over his mother whereas the London Christ tries to sit elegantly on his mother's lap, but appears as if he was standing. He extends his right hand in a gesture of blessing, and holds the scroll with his left hand. His mother's right hand crosses under his right arm as if to steady him and to point towards him in the typical position of the Virgin Hodegetria, the mother who guides the viewer to her son. Her left

¹¹ Similar colors for the crenellation appear on the walls of Jerusalem in the image of the Entry into Jerusalem fol. 115r of the London manuscript (Leroy 1964, Pl. 86,1).

¹² Leroy 1964, Pl. 89,4.

hand is hidden behind the Child. In the Vatican image, the hand of the Virgin comes around the body of the Child. In both images, the feet do not reach the ground in front of the throne. They seem to hang in midair but if we look closely to the London image, we realize that they are resting on the edge of the rug.

THE PLACE OF THE IMAGE IN THE READINGS

The image of the Mother and Child Enthroned appears in the second quire of both manuscripts: on fol. 24r of British Library Add. 7170 and on fol. 17r of Vatican Syr. 559 (See also the table at the end of this article).

In the iconographical sequence of both volumes, it follows a composite and all-inclusive image of the Nativity, which features the gift-bearing Magi, the angels' Annunciation to the Shepherds, the sitting Joseph and the midwives washing the Christ Child, on fol. 21r in London and fol. 16r in the Vatican. In the textual sequence, it follows the reading from the Gospel of Matthew 1:18-25: 'Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph ... And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called His name Jesus'. This reading is for the celebration of the liturgy and communion (ܐܘܬܝܪ) on the day of the Nativity.

The following text is from Luke 2:15-21, the Adoration of the Shepherds, which starts with: 'And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away ... his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb'. It is read for the vespers on the day of the Nativity. Its title is: ܐܘܬܝܪ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܝܬܝܢ ܕܡܠܟܝܢ: 'the vespers readings from Luke for the Mother of God'. Thus, the image in the London manuscript appears in the middle of the right column, framed on the top by: 'He called His name Jesus' and on the bottom by the title for the next reading: 'for the Mother of God vespers from Luke: And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away ...'. In the Vatican manuscript, the image is preceded in the upper part of the right column by only one line: 'Vespers from Luke Harclean' followed immediately by the text of the Gospel in the lower lines of the right column.

This reading from Luke 2:15-21 is a repetition of the reading for the liturgy during the night celebration of the Nativity when the text of Luke 2 is read from verse 1 to verse 20. In this passage, in

verse 19, Mary ponders on the words of the angel as related to her by the shepherds.

These texts stress the coming of the saviour as announced to Joseph in his dream and to the Shepherds who came to worship the newborn Christ. The text of Matthew 2:1-21 describing the visit of the shepherds and their adoration of the Christ Child serves as the reading for the matins of the Feast of the Nativity on fols 22v and 23r in the London manuscript.

Therefore the Syriac title of the next reading refers to the feast of the Mother of God according to Luke. Clearly, the vespers readings refer to the feast celebrated on the next day. The reading for the matins is from Matthew 12:46-50 in which Christ defines who are his mother and brethren and thus seems unrelated to the cycle of the Nativity while the text of the liturgy is the complete Magnificat from Luke 1:46-56.

DISCUSSION

Both the Hodegetria and the Mother and Child Enthroned are common throughout the historical and geographical configuration of Byzantine art. Since we are dealing with Syrian Orthodox manuscripts, we can perhaps turn our attention to the same medium in Byzantium, rather than look at monumental art. The location and frequency of this representation in Byzantine manuscript illuminations might shed some light on this type of representation because access to this material might have been easier for the local artists of Mosul.

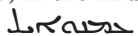
But an important question arises: how does this image respond to a need in its Syrian Orthodox context and what does it really illustrate? Rather than consider the immediate text of the Adoration of the Shepherds, we need to turn our attention to the whole series for the day (vespers, matins and liturgy) illustrated by the Mother and Child Enthroned. This devotional image does not seem to illustrate any of the readings to provide enough understanding for its choice in the middle of a narrative iconography.

Considering the chronological order of the lectionary system, the Syrian Orthodox calendar dedicates the day following the feast of the Nativity to the Glorification of Mary, a feast that the Syrian Orthodox Church shares with the Byzantine one: the Synaxis of Mary on the 26th of

December¹³. In the Byzantine tradition, the reading is from Matthew 2:13-23, the Flight into Egypt¹⁴ which is also read for the Sunday after the Nativity¹⁵.

The tradition of the Glorification of the Virgin Mary continues to our present day in the Syrian Orthodox Church. The vespers reading remains the same, with a change in the matins and liturgy¹⁶. These texts are from Luke 11:23-32 and Luke 8:16-21. Despite this difference, the message is the same. In Luke 11:27-28, Christ responds to the blessing of the womb and the breasts by the blessing of those who hear the Word of God and keep it and in Luke 8:21, He identifies his mother and brethren as those who hear the word of God and do it, a similar message to the one of Matthew 12:46-50 found in the thirteenth-century lectionaries.

The two Syrian Orthodox lectionaries clearly differ from the Byzantine tradition by giving a whole set of readings for the feast. In effect, this image of the Hodegetria or Mother and Child Enthroned has become an image of the Glorification of the Virgin and should be discussed as such. Bearing this in mind, we can continue our discussion of the relationship of text and image.

Returning to the written page, we find a small inscription in the Vatican manuscript that could serve as a clue. On the facing page to the image, fol. 16v, in the middle margin, the scribe has added a note:  'the Sunday of Emmanuel'. De Jerphanion does not report on its significance but lists a Sunday of Emmanuel in his table of celebrations¹⁷.

This note can suggest an instruction or a reminder given by the scribe to the illuminator, regarding the image that should be represented in the space allocated. Does this mean that the scribe expected an image of the Christ Emmanuel in lieu of the Virgin and Child? It would appear so in our first impression. But the technical evidence of the two manuscripts also suggests that the artist would sometimes override the scribe's instruction¹⁸. Therefore, in our analysis, we must consider the coordination between the two celebrations of the Glorification of the Virgin and the Sunday of Emmanuel which the scribe and the artists had in mind respectively. Any discussion of the image needs to take into account the implications of this double feast.

From the Syrian Orthodox point of view, the closest example of the Mother and Child Enthroned appears in a liturgical fan (A.D. 1202/1203; Pl. 3), presently preserved at the Musée Royal de Mariemont in Morlanwelz, Belgium, which was the subject of a detailed article by Bas Snelders and Mat Immerzeel¹⁹. This object was used at the Monastery of the Syrians in Egypt, better known to this day as Deir al-Surian (located in the Wadi al-Natrun), which, in the Middle Ages, was a stronghold of the Syrian Orthodox community in Egypt. After careful examination, the authors of the study determined that the liturgical fan originated in Mosul and may have been carried as a gift to Deir al-Surian²⁰. This attribution to Mosul fits with the stylistic identification of the illuminations as a product of a workshop from the same city²¹. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that it has a similar representation of the Mother and Child Enthroned which the authors identify as a Hodegetria type²². The few differences between the liturgical fan's Hodegetria and the Glorification image, the legs of the throne, the feet of the Virgin on a crescent and the two angels, appear negligible for our discussion, because the essential point is a clear preference of Syrian Orthodox patrons of Mosul for the Enthroned Hodegetria.

In 2005, a relief with the Enthroned Hodegetria was discovered in Mosul in the Syrian Orthodox Church of the Virgin²³. The Virgin is seated on a cushioned throne similar to the one seen in the lectionaries and the liturgical fan. This discovery strengthens the argument for the popularity of this representation in Mosul.

A Syrian Orthodox book of sermons from the twelfth/thirteenth century preserved in Berlin Sachau 220 carries two representations of the Mother and

¹³ Mateos 1962, 159.

¹⁴ Mateos 1962, 161.

¹⁵ Mateos 1962, 163.

¹⁶ Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church 2000, 20.

¹⁷ De Jerphanion 1940, 15-16.

¹⁸ For other examples, see Smine forthcoming.

¹⁹ Snelders/Immerzeel 2004, 113-139.

²⁰ Snelders/Immerzeel 2004, 131; see also Snelders forthcoming, Ch. 3.

²¹ Smine forthcoming.

²² Snelders/Immerzeel 2004, 119.

²³ Snelders forthcoming, Ch. 3. I am thankful to Bas Snelders for sharing with me this information and showing me an image of the relief.



*Pl. 3. Mother and Child Enthroned; medallion on the liturgical fan from Deir al-Surian;
Musée Royal de Mariemont, Morlanwelz (photograph Demet Varlı)*

Child²⁴. On fol. 11v, between Jacob of Sarug's homily on the Nativity and Severus of Antioch's discourse on the Mother of God, Mary is shown standing holding the Christ Child²⁵. She looks at the viewer and gestures with her right hand towards

Christ. She reappears in the same pause of the standing Hodegetria on fol. 13r, at the end of a homily by St John Chrysostom. Although they are in a standing position, their inclusion between sermons on the Mother of God makes them relevant for our discussion.

Another example of the representation of the Enthroned Hodegetria appears in a thirteenth-century lectionary in Syriac but belonging to the

²⁴ Leroy 1964, 341-349.

²⁵ Leroy 1964, 342, Pl. 117,1.

East Syrian Church, as Leroy describes it 'Usage Nestorien'²⁶. Although fragmentary, on fol. 2r we can clearly see the large cushion on which the Virgin sits and her hand leading towards the figure of the Christ Child. The placement of this image at the beginning of the manuscript might not correspond to a reading or specific feast, however, the importance of this image is strengthened from its use as a frontispiece.

Lazarev confirmed the eastern provenance of the image of the Hodegetria²⁷. Building on his argument, Snelders and Immerzeel discussed the prominent position of the Enthroned Hodegetria in the art of the Christian East, especially Greater Syria, where she is second only to the Virgin Nikopoia²⁸, another representation of Mary carrying the Christ Child while sitting on a throne, but without the guiding gesture towards Christ. Did the artists of the two Syrian Orthodox lectionaries differentiate between an enthroned Hodegetria and a Nikopoia? Or did they deliberately choose an enthroned Hodegetria?

When we consider the iconography of the two lectionaries, it appears to be familiar with the Byzantine tradition. However, the answers to questions on Syrian Orthodox art cannot always come from Byzantine art. We should consider the significance of the Virgin in the Syrian Orthodox Church, especially when it is associated with the celebration of the Nativity and the Emmanuel. This celebration is a major argument for a Syriac interpretation of the image, since Mary is always associated with the idea of Incarnation.

The role of Mary and her importance in the Incarnation is a recurring theme in the writings of the Syrian Orthodox Church Fathers. Jacob of Sarug wrote a series of homilies on the Mother of God and, as we have seen above, his homily on the Nativity was illustrated by an image of a standing Hodegetria in Berlin Sachau 220²⁹, a manuscript contemporary with our two Syrian Orthodox lectionaries. Jacob of Sarug calls Mary 'Second Heaven' in his first homily on the Mother of God³⁰. He repeats the words of the Magnificat, read for the liturgy celebration in both lectionaries as a sign of recognition of her exalted status³¹. Jacob of Sarug puts the words of the prophecy of Isaiah 'Behold, ... the Virgin will conceive' in the mouth of Elizabeth who explains to Mary the mystery of her conception³². Though Jacob of Sarug omits the part on

the Emmanuel, the whole discourse of Elizabeth to Mary centers on the theme of God dwelling amongst men and on the Incarnation.

This theme is constantly reiterated in the series of 'Hymns on the Nativity' composed, in Syriac, by St Ephrem the Syrian in the fourth century. Compilations of the hymns from later centuries³³ indicate that they were commonly used throughout the history of the Syrian Orthodox Church and during the celebration in the church service of the feast. Therefore, they are relevant to our discussion of the thirteenth-century lectionaries. In these hymns, we find several references to the Incarnation and the Emmanuel, and Mary is honored not for herself but for the divine presence within her³⁴: 'She is the Tablet of the Law and the Ark of the Covenant'³⁵.

Not only does the Syrian Orthodox Church share the symbolism of Mary in the Incarnation, it goes even beyond it to consider her the source of the Incarnation, if not the Incarnation itself, as witnessed in the Syrian Orthodox version of the liturgy of St James. The Mother of God is called upon not only as the source of Incarnation, but as Incarnation itself. The role that Mary plays is even more intensified during the Consecration, when she is equaled to the Eucharist, which 'she overshadows'³⁶.

As Sebastian Brock explains, the Holy Spirit can only come down on the Gifts when every believer acquiesces to it like Mary's assent at the Annunciation³⁷. In this sense, the reading of Matthew 12:46-50 becomes totally appropriate, since in it, Christ defines the identity of his mother and brethren as '... whoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister, and my mother' (Matthew 12:50).

²⁶ Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Sachau 304: Leroy 1964, 367, Pl. 125,1.

²⁷ Lazarev 1995, 241.

²⁸ Snelders/Immerzeel 2004, 122.

²⁹ Leroy 1964, 342, Pl. 117,1.

³⁰ Hansbury 1998, 18.

³¹ Hansbury 1998, 40-41.

³² Hansbury 1998, 55.

³³ McVey 1989, 29.

³⁴ McVey 1989, 148, in reference to strophe 16 of Hymn 16 on the Nativity.

³⁵ McVey 1989, 33.

³⁶ Brock 1979, 51.

³⁷ Brock 1979, 58.

When the reading for the liturgy returns to the Magnificat, the text which glorifies God, Mary admits her own glorification as well: 'from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things' (Luke 1:48-49).

A Syrian Orthodox prayer sung on the feast of the Glorification of the Theotokos declares her: 'Blessed and Glorious is the Mother of God, the pure Virgin who received the Most High, the glorious tabernacle of the divinity, the radiant place of the *Shekhina* (sleeping or quietness) of the Maker of All, the pure temple of the Word God, the bridal chamber (*Beth Gnona*) of the Heavenly Bride ...'³⁸.

At the beginning of his First Hymn on the Nativity, Ephrem declares: 'today the Virgin has given birth to Emmanuel in Bethlehem'. He continues in his Second Hymn: 'Worthy of remembrance is the Mother who gave birth to Him ...' and later on he adds: 'Bethlehem thanks you' (second Hymn on the Nativity). And thus, in thanking her, Bethlehem recognizes Mary as the one without whom the Incarnation would not have happened. In the Fifth Hymn, she is shown meditating on the Incarnation, and in the Eleventh Hymn, Ephrem states: 'A wonder is Your Mother', because she can speak to Christ her son like no one else can. She is the best to know the Unknowable (Hymn on the Nativity 25)³⁹.

That Mary knows what others do not can be linked to other hymns by Ephrem, such as Hymn 37, On the Church. We find him describing her as the only one to know Him, further substantiated by the fact that she is the 'Luminous Eye' in contrast with Eve, who is the blind eye. With her limpid, pure or clear eye (the Syriac term *Shafitha* is difficult to translate), she was able to witness the Incarnation like no other person could and because she was so pure and limpid herself, all of humanity could see the Incarnation through her⁴⁰. Therefore, she becomes the Eye of Humanity.

For Ephrem, her exalted state is further intensified by the fact that her name starts with the same letter as Messiah⁴¹, and through her, the second birth was revealed to all. Furthermore, in his Hymn on Virginity, Ephrem states that the Creation gives birth to Christ in Symbols as Mary did in the flesh⁴². Again in his hymns on the Nativity, Ephrem states that, even after His Birth, she kept the power of her Son within her: Hymn 16 strophe 2, 'While I gave birth to You openly, Your hidden power was not removed from me, O Mystifier of his mother'. Because she can see both the hidden and the unhidden incarnation, she was able to see the Father. In the same hymn, Mary says:

*Just as I gave birth to Him
– a further birth, so too did He give birth to me
a second birth: He put on His mother's robe
Her body, while I put on His glory*⁴³.

The Nativity and the Emmanuel are viewed as the Incarnation of Christ through his mother. In Hymn 25 on the Nativity, Ephrem discusses the meaning of the name Emmanuel as one of great mystery revealed through Mary who was the only one to know him since he dwelt in her and thus she is exalted because of Him. From his first hymn to his 25th hymn on the Nativity, for Ephrem, the theme of the Emmanuel is a recurring one often juxtaposed with the Virgin Mary.

Since the artists of the two Syrian Orthodox lectionaries were inspired by Byzantine manuscripts, as the whole iconography seems to indicate, it is fair to assume that they transposed this image from the frontispiece to the middle of the readings. Thus, the next step will aim to determine what justified the artists in the new setting of the image before a specific reading in the Syrian Orthodox lectionary system.

This juxtaposition of Mary and the Christ Emmanuel in the Syrian Orthodox hymns of St Ephrem and in the understanding of the Eucharist is paralleled in some Byzantine manuscripts of the later Comnenian period. Annemarie Weyl Carr discusses the new iconography in her article on Comnenian Gospels frontispieces⁴⁴. During this period, Carr sees the development of distinct iconographic themes⁴⁵ especially in the provincial manuscripts. She describes the emergence of specific images in response to private devotional needs: Moses Receiving the Law, Christ in Majesty, the

³⁸ Brock 1982, 228.

³⁹ McVey 1989, 199.

⁴⁰ Brock 1992, 71-73.

⁴¹ Hymn 27 on the Nativity; McVey 1989, 211.

⁴² Brock 1992, 56.

⁴³ Brock 1992, 89.

⁴⁴ Weyl Carr 1982, 3-20.

⁴⁵ Weyl Carr 1982, 3.

Christ Emmanuel, the Deesis, the Virgin and Child Enthroned, etc. She demonstrated that: 'The pattern exemplified by the Deesis, of a shift to devotional terminology, is confirmed by the Virgin and Child'⁴⁶. She points out that most of the books are Tetraevangelia and not lectionaries. In some cases, we find double frontispieces, in a diptych style, associating two images, such as Moses Receiving the Law and the Christ Emmanuel in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Gr. 1335⁴⁷, or the Enthroned Hodegetria and the Christ Emmanuel in Kiev, Ms. A 25, fols 1v and 2r⁴⁸. The image of the Christ Emmanuel takes on greater significance during the later Comnenian period in the Byzantine provincial manuscripts as a response to the patronage of the Comnenian family⁴⁹. Its association with the Enthroned Virgin is not surprising, as for the Byzantines, she is also a symbol of the Incarnation of the Word of God⁵⁰. Therefore, she always appears as such in the frontispieces and never in the middle of the text.

As we have previously seen, the same symbolism exists in the Syrian Orthodox Church but the location of the image is determined by the liturgical calendar, rather than by the importance. By associating it with the representation of the frontispieces in Byzantine provincial manuscripts, and especially Tetraevangelia, we can understand its significance. The Image of the Mother and Child Enthroned in the Syrian Orthodox tradition becomes equivalent to that of the Emmanuel, as is justified in the Syrian Orthodox liturgy, in regard to the role of the Virgin Mary. The fact that the feast of the Glorification of Mary happens on the Sunday of Emmanuel justifies even more this representation.

The association of the Glorification of Mary and the Emmanuel already existed in Syrian Orthodox art. In the tenth century, in the Church of the Virgin of the aforementioned Deir al-Surian monastery, the sanctuary doors inlaid with ivory or bone juxtapose the Mother and Child Enthroned with the Christ Emmanuel in the two central panels⁵¹. The existence of this pairing in a stronghold of the Syrian Orthodox Church, the recipient of another image of the Enthroned Hodegetria (liturgical fan) reinforces the combination of the Glorification with the Sunday of Emmanuel. Therefore, the image of the Hodegetria represents the Sunday of Emmanuel and thus the Sunday of the Incarnation.

As a result, the representation of the Virgin and Child Enthroned replaces and is equivalent if not

more important than the representation of the Christ Emmanuel, because it encompasses together the Feast of the Glorification of the Virgin and the celebration of the Incarnation of the Emmanuel. It serves a double meaning: devotional and liturgical. The artists of the Syrian Orthodox lectionaries understood the juxtaposition of the Virgin and Child Enthroned with the Christ Emmanuel as seen in the example of the Kiev manuscript and chose the image that best served their purposes.

Rather than consider Byzantine manuscripts as the source for the iconography of the other eastern Churches, I would like to suggest that here, the Syrian Orthodox iconographer, although totally aware of the Byzantine tradition, chose for his representation the image that serves in his eyes a dual meaning and summarizes the mystery of the Incarnation of the Emmanuel through the image of the Mother and Child Enthroned. The combination of the feast of the Glorification of the Virgin with that of the Sunday of Emmanuel allowed him to single out one image for his illumination, finding it more than sufficient. The image of the Mother and Child Enthroned equals that of the Emmanuel and the religious feast has superseded the narrative of the Gospel in this image. The artists did not take liberties in their choice but represented what corresponded best to the readings and the feasts in the Syrian Orthodox tradition. This choice allowed the artists to use the image of the Enthroned Hodegetria in a double meaning: Glorification of Mary and Sunday of Emmanuel.

Thus, the difference between the Byzantine usage of this image and the Syrian Orthodox one lies in its placement in the codex and in its liturgical role. While in Byzantine manuscripts this image appears in the frontispiece facing the Emmanuel and taking on a purely theological role as symbol of the Incarnation, the Syrian Orthodox tradition uses it differently.

⁴⁶ Weyl Carr 1982, 6.

⁴⁷ Weyl Carr 1982, 4.

⁴⁸ Weyl Carr 1982, 15, Figs 8, 9.

⁴⁹ Weyl Carr 1982, 9.

⁵⁰ Weyl Carr 1982, 6.

⁵¹ The Virgin and Child are represented on the sanctuary doors between the *khurus* and *haykal* (A.D. 914) and between the nave and the *khurus* (A.D. 926/927), as well as on a contemporary wooden chest; Bolman 2006, Fig. 24; Immerzeel 2009, 30-31, with further references.

The Virgin and Child Enthroned appeals from two Syrian Orthodox points of view. The first one is the calendar year in which Mary is glorified and the Emmanuel is celebrated on the same day. The second one is based on the regular mention in the liturgy of Mary the source of the Incarnation, Mary the eye who could see the truth of the Incarnation which was revealed through her, Mary the one who by accepting the Holy Spirit and conceiving Christ allowed the Incarnation to happen. The continuous references to Mary as source of Incarnation in the hymns of St Ephrem, the homilies of Jacob of Sarug, and the regular prayers of the Feqitha of the Syrian Orthodox Church intensify this reality and the artists felt at liberty to represent her in this role. From this point of view, the reading of Matthew 12:46-50 for the matins further explains the choice of the Hodegetria type of Virgin as opposed to a Nikopoia. She guides towards Christ with her hand as she has done so in her obedience to the will of God to make her deserving to be the Mother of Christ.

CONCLUSION

The image of the Virgin and Child Enthroned in the two Syrian Orthodox lectionaries combines the devotional with the symbolic. It is an image that should be associated with the church calendar and liturgy, since it represents two celebrations: the Glorification of Mary and the Incarnation of the Christ Emmanuel.

Because the Virgin is viewed as a symbol of Church and Incarnation in the Syrian Orthodox tradition, the artists responsible for the production of these two volumes deliberately picked this image which faces the Christ Emmanuel in Byzantine manuscripts. They were astute in choosing the Mother and Child Enthroned to represent the Sunday of Emmanuel, a choice justified by its setting in the calendar year and the commemoration of the Incarnation of the Christ Emmanuel. It is not a literate representation of the Gospel narrative but a representation of the liturgical calendar of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the thirteenth century.

By joining together the Sunday of Emmanuel and the Glorification of the Virgin, the artists produced an image that corresponds to the vision of their milieu of the Incarnation. Given the choice between the Enthroned Hodegetria and the Emmanuel, they chose the former because in their patrons' circle, such a representation encompasses both meanings.

The association found in Byzantine manuscripts of both the Virgin Nikopoia and the Christ Emmanuel on two facing folios gives way in the Syrian Orthodox lectionaries to a singular image encompassing both representations and carrying a dual meaning.

The fact that the Virgin and Child Enthroned (whether Nikopoia or Hodegetria) is the type of Virgin prevalent in the Christian East provides a clue that this is a particularly eastern preference. Rather than seeing Syrian Orthodox manuscripts illuminations as derivative of Byzantine iconography, we should consider them as complete cultural entities representing the art of the Christian communities of the Middle East, related to but independent of Byzantine manuscripts.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church for the Eastern USA 2000, *Scripture Readings for Sundays and Feast Days According to the Tradition of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch*, New Jersey.
- Bolman, E. 2006, 'Veiling Sanctity in Christian Egypt: Visual and Spatial Solutions', in: S.E.J. Gerstel (ed.), *Thresholds of the Sacred. Architectural, Historical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West*, Dumbarton Oaks, 74-104.
- Brock, S. 1979, 'Mary and the Eucharist: an oriental perspective', *Sobornost* 1/2, 50-59.
- Brock, S. 1982, 'Passover, Annunciation and Epiclesis: some remarks on the term *Aggen* in the Syriac Version of Luke 1:35', *Novum Testamentum* XXIV, 3, 222-233 (Reprinted in Brock, S. 2006, *Fire from Heaven: studies in Syriac theology and liturgy* (Variorum Collected Studies 863)).
- Brock, S. 1992, *The Luminous Eye: the spiritual world vision of Saint Ephrem*, Kalamazoo (Cistercian Studies Series 124).
- Buchthal, H. 1939, 'The Painting of the Syrian Jacobites in Its Relation to Byzantine and Islamic Art', *Syria* 20, 136-150.
- Fiey, J.-M. 1975, 'Hulagu, Doquz Khatun ... et Six Ambons?', *Le Muséon* 88, 59-68.
- Hansbury, M. (ed. and transl.) 1998, *Jacob of Sarug: On the Mother of God*, with an introduction by Sebastian Brock, New York.
- Immerzeel, M. 2009, *Identity Puzzles. Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, Leuven (OLA 184).
- Jerphanion, G., de 1940, *Les miniatures du manuscrit syriaque N° 559 de la Bibliothèque Vaticane*, Vatican City.
- Lazarev, V.N. 1995, 'Studies in the Iconography of the Virgin', in: V.N. Lazarev, *Studies in Byzantine Painting*, London, 196-248 (reprint of *ArtB* 20.1 (1938), 26-65).
- Leroy, J. 1964, *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient*, Paris.
- Leroy, J. 1971, 'La Renaissance de l'Eglise syriaque aux XII^e-XIII^e siècles', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 14, 131-148, 239-255.

- Mateos, J. 1962, *Le Typicon de la Grande Église, Ms. Sainte-Croix n° 40, X^e siècle, Tome I, Le cycle des douze mois*, Rome.
- McVey, K. (transl.) 1989, *Saint Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*, New York.
- Smine, R., *The Illuminations of Syriac Lectionaries British Library Add. 7170 and Vatican Syr. 559*, forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation.
- Snelders, B., *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction. Medieval Art of the Syrian Orthodox from the Mosul Area*, Leuven, forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation.
- Snelders, B., M. Immerzeel 2004, 'The Thirteenth Century Flabellum from Deir al-Surian in the Musée Royal de Mariemont (Morlanwelz, Belgium). With an Appendix on the Syriac inscriptions by Lucas Van Rompay', *ECA* 1, 113-139.
- Weyl Carr, A. 1982, 'Gospel Frontispieces from the Comnenian Period', *Gesta* 21, 3-20 (Reprinted in Weyl Carr, A. 2005, *Cyprus and the Devotional Arts of Byzantium in the Era of the Crusades*, Ashgate (Variorum Collected Studies CS 806)).

Textual Sequence for the Feast of the Glorification of the Virgin

British Library Add. 7170	Vatican Syr. 559
20r: Decorative vignette over the vespers' reading of John 1:1-17 for the Nativity.	13r: Empty space between the lines of title of vespers from John 1:1-17 for the 'Nativity of the Lord'.
21r: Nativity under the end of the John text in six lines.	
21v: Reading from Luke 2:1-20 for the 'Night of the Nativity' in gold letters with red outline.	14r: Reading from Luke 2:1-20, for the 'Night of the Nativity'.
22v: Matins from Matthew 2:1-12.	15r: Matins from Matthew 2:1-12 for the 'Day of the Nativity'.
23r: Liturgy of the Nativity from Matthew 1:18-25.	
	16r: Nativity over six lines of text: 'Liturgy Harclean' ܠܝܬܘܪܝܬܐ ܡܝܬܝܢ ܡܬܬܝܬܐ ܡܬܬܝܬܐ from Matthew 1:18-25.
	16v: vertical line added: 'the Sunday of Emmanuel' ܠܝܬܘܪܝܬܐ ܡܬܬܝܬܐ Line 24 added: 'Memory of Mary' ܡܝܬܝܢ ܡܬܬܝܬܐ ܡܬܬܝܬܐ
24r: Mother and Child Enthroned in the middle of the column over the title: 'Vespers for the Mother of God from Luke' 2:15-21. Adoration of the Shepherds.	17r: Mother and Child Enthroned under one line of the right column: 'Vespers from Luke Harclean' 2:15-21.
24v: Matins from Matthew 12:46-50 at the bottom of the right column.	17v: Matins from Matthew 12:46-50.
24v: Liturgy from Luke 2:46-56: The Magnificat. We have only the first line: 'and Mary said' as the following folio is missing.	17v: Liturgy from Luke 1:46-56: The Magnificat.

Book Reviews

Jitse H.F. DIJKSTRA, *Philae and the End of Ancient Egyptian Religion. A Regional Study of Religious Transformation (298-642 CE)*, Leuven: Peeters Publishers & Department of Oriental Studies, 2008 (OLA 173); 466 pp.; Figures 1-16 (black and white); ISBN 978-90-429-2031-6.

This book, a revision of J.H.F. Dijkstra's dissertation *Religious Encounters on the Southern Egyptian Frontier in Late Antiquity (AD 298-642)* (Groningen 2005), takes a fresh look at the religious transformation of the temple island of Philae and the surrounding area in Late Antiquity.

The General Introduction sets the scene with an incident that is recorded in a Greek petition dated AD 567, which provides exceptionally late evidence for traditional Egyptian religion. This observation contradicts the generally accepted idea that the temple cults abruptly came to an end in 535-537, when the Emperor Justinian ordered to close the temples of Philae, 'one of the last bastions of pagan worship'. The account by the sixth-century historian Procopius, on which this idea is based, apparently is too simplified to account for the complex process of religious transformation at Philae in Late Antiquity. The problem brings up three main questions: 1) What happened to the cults at Philae in Late Antiquity? 2) What was the role played by Christianity on the island? 3) Was Philae such an exceptional case?

In order to find a more satisfactory explanation, religious transformation in Late Antiquity should not be considered as a one-way process in terms of 'decline' and 'Christian triumph', but as 'a dynamic and gradual process of cultural change' (p. 15). Adopting a regional approach, Dijkstra examines the transformation of Philae from an Ancient Egyptian cult centre into a Christian society within the context of the First Cataract region, which also included the town of Syene (modern Aswan) and Elephantine.

The book offers the first synthesis of the abundantly preserved literary, documentary and archaeological sources that are related to the First Cataract area in Late Antiquity, and adopts a multidisciplinary approach. Having participated in the excavations at Aswan and Elephantine between 2001 and 2003 (pp. VI-VII), Dijkstra is able to provide up-to-date information as well as accurate descriptions of the sites and the inscriptions *in situ*.

The book consists of three parts. In order to place Philae in the context of a region that gradually became Christian, Part

I begins with describing the expansion of Christianity in the First Cataract area, addressing the second main question first. Part II examines the state of the temple cults at Philae in the fourth and fifth centuries, focussing on the first main question. Part III deals with the creation of a Christian identity of sixth-century Philae.

In Part I, the organization and gradual integration of Christianity in the First Cataract area is examined on the basis of four developments. Chapter 1 describes the developments that are attested in textual sources from the fourth and fifth centuries. Firstly, bishoprics were created at Syene and Philae at around 330, as in the rest of Egypt. Secondly, the few documents from the region reveal an increasing use of Christian names as well as phrases and crosses. Thirdly, monasticism spread over the region in the course of these centuries.

Chapter 2 focuses on Syene and Elephantine in the sixth century, when Christianity was fully integrated in all segments of society. The main source on Christian Syene is the Patermouthis Archive, a large group of Greek and Coptic papyri that was first assumed to have come from Elephantine. Dijkstra, however, is able to identify Aswan as the place of origin (pp. 65-67; also see his article in *BASP* 44 (2007)). The papyri from the archive demonstrate that both the army and the Church played an important role in sixth-century Syene. The ostraka from Elephantine reveal that the situation on this island was similar.

Chapter 3 describes the changing sacred landscape, the fourth development that attests to the expansion and integration of Christianity, and presents an overview of the material remains of the temples as well as churches at Syene and Elephantine. (The temples and churches of Philae are discussed in Chapter 10.) Dijkstra remarks that the fate of most temples was less violent than Christian literary sources suggest. Their reuse or destruction was motivated by practical rather than religious considerations. Moreover, 'temple conversion', the reuse of temples as churches, was just one of the possibilities (p. 94).

Referring back to Chapter 1 (pp. 61-62), Dijkstra remarks: 'It became clear that of the three monastic sites found in the region, only one, the monastery of St. Hatre, goes back to a predecessor in Late Antiquity, when a monastic community lived there in stone quarries in the sixth or seventh century (or even earlier)' (p. 85). I would like to add that the monastery of Qubbat al-Hawa, one of the other two sites, was also preceded by an older settlement, which developed in and around pharaonic tombs, possibly in Late Antiquity. The original

church was built inside the pillared hall of the tomb of Khunes, as the traces of walls suggest, and various basins as well as dividing walls were observed in some other tombs (P. Grossmann 1991, 'Dayr Qubbat al-Hawa: Monuments', CE 3, 851-852). Unfortunately, these early constructions have not been published, and no dating has been proposed.

In Part II Dijkstra describes the gradual isolation and contraction of the Ancient Egyptian cults at Philae in the fourth and fifth centuries, imbedding this process in a local and regional context. By the end of the fourth century most temple cults in the First Cataract area had come to an end, but the cultic activity at Philae continued for some time, thanks to the support of the peoples south of Philae, the Blemmyes and Noubades (pp. 127-128).

Chapter 4 clarifies the relations between the southern peoples and Philae. For centuries the Romans had openly tolerated the access of peoples south of Egypt to the temple island, in order to keep the peace on Egypt's southern frontier. Dijkstra balances the literary accounts of Procopius and Priscus about the Blemmyes and Noubades with documents from these peoples themselves. Whereas Procopius and Priscus created the impression that the Blemmyes and Noubades were organized in two kingdoms, which cooperated during wars with the Romans, the 'inside' sources rather present the picture of a complex tribal society, in which various tribes fought with each other, rather than with Rome. Some of these tribes appear to have kept diplomatic relationships with Rome and to have received a federate status as well as payment. Dijkstra suggests that this money may have been used to finance the temple cults at Philae, which could well explain their continuity (pp. 171-173).

Nevertheless, the temple cults of Philae were increasingly contracted and isolated, as Dijkstra demonstrates in Chapter 5, by analysing and quantifying the fourth- and fifth-century inscriptions of the island, and by examining their position on the island. The demotic and Greek graffiti decreased in number, and were carved ever closer to the temple of Isis, marking areas that were no longer used for cultic purposes. (p. 192). Chapter 6 focuses on the contents of the inscriptions, which testify to the last priests of Philae and their cultic activities. They witnessed the end of Ancient Egyptian religion as an institution around 456/457, although certain groups may have remained attracted to the site afterwards (p. 214).

Part III examines how the Christian community of sixth-century Philae created a Christian identity, and how it attempted to explain its 'pagan' past. Chapter 7 describes the features of the *Life of Aaron*, a hagiographical work from the First Cataract area that includes a legendary history of the first bishops of Philae that is situated in the fourth and fifth centuries. In Chapter 8 Dijkstra convincingly argues that the description of the conversion of Philae in the *Life of Aaron* reflects 'the perspective of a later Christian community on its formative period when almost everything was still 'pagan'' (p. 269).

In the last two chapters of Part III, Dijkstra disentangles three events that are often believed to have been directly related: the closure of the temples at Philae in 535-537, the building of a church inside the temple of Isis by Bishop Theodore of Philae, and the Byzantine missions to Nubia. In Chapter 9 he

argues that the closure of the temples was a symbolic deed, since the cults had already come to an end, and that the reason for the first mission to Nubia was diplomatic, and not religious. These events were not part of a deliberate anti-'pagan' policy, as has generally been assumed, but can be explained as imperial measures with regard to Egypt's southern neighbour, the Kingdom of Noubadia, and were not or hardly connected (p. 304). Bishop Theodore was involved in the first mission, because Philae was the nearest see to Noubadia. Chapter 10 describes the initiatives undertaken by Theodore to promote the Christian identity of Philae, such as the construction of the church of St Stephen in the temple of Isis, which probably stood empty for some time. Dijkstra argues that there is no evidence to assume that the church was built directly after the temple was closed. The *Life of Aaron* also contributed to the creation of Philae's Christian identity.

By combining literary, documentary and material sources, Dijkstra is able to reconstruct the multifaceted process of religious transformation in the First Cataract region and to correct generally accepted ideas that are only based on literary texts. As a result, his conclusions are original and balanced. Considering the continuity of the Ancient Egyptian cults, Philae was unique, but its regional context was not so different from the rest of Egypt (p. 347).

The book includes six appendices, containing the updated texts and translations of the Dioscorus petition, key passages by Procopius and Priscus on Philae, and the Appion petition, as well as lists of the Late Antique bishops of Syene and Philae, and of demotic graffiti in Egypt. Also included are a long bibliography, three indices, and sixteen figures, mostly maps.

In conclusion, this publication is not only interesting for its new insights in the history of Late Antique Philae, but also for its multidisciplinary approach, which sets an example for the study of religious transformation in general.

Renate Dekker, Leiden University

Anthony EASTMOND, *Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium*, Aldershot & Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005 (Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Monographs 10); 246 pp.; 24.4 × 16.9 cm; 125 illustrations; ISBN 0-7546-3575-9; £ 50.

In 1204, crusader forces captured Constantinople and large parts of the surrounding lands. The once so powerful Byzantine Empire was now broken into three smaller empires ruled by rivaling dynasties, all of which claimed to be the legitimate successor to the throne: the Empires of Thessaloniki, Nicea and Trebizond. Ultimately the Nicean ruler Michael VIII Palaiologos regained control over Constantinople in 1261, but his power was not established universally. The independent Empire of Trebizond, squeezed in between the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum in Central Turkey, Georgia and the Black Sea, continued to exist for another two centuries, and would even survive the Byzantine Empire by eight years.

Anthony Eastmond's study deals with the ruling period of Trebizond's Emperor Manuel I Grand Komnenos (1238-1263), and focuses on the Church of Hagia Sophia at Trebizond, which was erected during his reign. This monastic church was the only complete Byzantine imperial commission from the period of the Latin Empire of Constantinople (p. xix), and in Eastmond's view, '(...) provides a detailed and expressive model for the reconstruction of a Byzantine imperial identity in exile' (p. 3). His detailed research aims at reconstructing how this 'identity of power' was given visual representation in the architecture and art of Hagia Sophia.

The church, located about two kilometres to the west of the city, has an unusual cross-in-square design, which shows the influence of Latin cross churches (Ch. 2). The triple-porched building stands on a podium containing mausoleums, and stands out from common Byzantine churches by featuring sculptural reliefs on its exterior. As regards the architectural features of the interior, Eastmond draws attention to elements pointing to the adaptation of the original plan. The reason for this change of design may well be sought in the four columns supporting the central dome construction (pp. 43-44). These are made of Proconnesian marble, a stone quarried on the Isle of Marmara near Constantinople, and seem to be sixth-century specimens brought from the former capital when the building was already underway. The political significance of the acquisition of these spoils should not be underestimated: 'If the building of the Hagia Sofia was part of an attempt to rebuild the city of Constantinople here at the east end of the Black Sea, then this was the most literal manifestation' (p. 44). Yet Manuel's imperial ambitions did not stop here. Building activities were also developed within Trebizond's walls, aimed at turning the city into an imperial capital; ceremonial and processions served as guidelines (Chapter 3).

The sculptural reliefs on the exterior of the three porches are a rarity in Byzantine church architecture. The most eye-catching frieze can be found on the south porch, and represents scenes from the Fall of Man (Chapter 4). The choice of this theme was not coincidental: the author raises the possibility that '(...) the sculpture was also planned to encapsulate the political position of the Grand Komnenoi' (p. 73). Indications for this follow from the typology of exile as expressed in the writings of Niketas Choniates and Theodore I Laskaris, who 'associated their expulsions from Constantinople in 1204 with that of Adam and Eve from Eden' (p. 73). Though reliefs of this kind are unfamiliar in the Byzantine context, they fully fit within the framework of architectural decoration of the closest neighbours of Trebizond, i.e. the Armenians, Georgians and Seljuks (Chapter 5). By contrast, the elaborate paintings of the interior, damaged though they are, seem to be firmly rooted in the simultaneously traditional and contemporary Byzantine mainstream (Chapter 6). Eastmond suspects inspiration from the art of Constantinople. An inscription in the dome of the church refers to 'the Lord of Sion and his worship in Jerusalem' (p. 100), and thus furnishes an important clue: for centuries Constantinople was regarded as the New Jerusalem – and the Byzantines as God's new chosen people –, a role now earmarked for Trebizond (p. 104). Stylistically speaking, the situation is not much different (Chapter 7). The formal aspects of the murals

point to the work of artists trained in the Byzantine, not to say metropolitan tradition, but Eastmond is right in arguing that the choice of painters was not necessarily inspired by ideology; it makes more sense to suppose that 'Manuel employed the best artists available to him in Trebizond' (p. 137).

Everything seems to come together in the effigy of Emperor Manuel, which is, however, only known from a description and a nineteenth-century copy (Chapter 7). He is not dressed as a Byzantine ruler, as on coins minted during his reign; instead he wears a long robe which would make his authority more acceptable to the neighbouring peoples. Through his dress Manuel was not only presented as pretender to the Byzantine throne, but also as the (potential) ruler of the Pontos.

Although Eastmond's commendable efforts to reconstruct Hagia Sophia's propagandistic message are convincing, one cannot escape the impression that the only due of real significance is the now-vanished effigy of Manuel. However, the sum of potential identity markers demonstrates that Hagia Sophia was no ordinary monastic church. A question that remains unanswered, and that will probably always remain open, is how this well-thought-out programme was developed. The emperor must have had a think tank at his disposal, a group of well-educated and diplomatically skilled collaborators, who, together with the architect and artists, arrived at a surprising result. The results of Eastmond's book are no less surprising.

Mat Immerzeel, Leiden University

Tjalling H.F. HALBERTSMA, *Early Christian Remains of Inner Mongolia. Discovery, Reconstruction and Appropriation*, Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2008 (Sinica Leidensia 88); xxx + 356 pp.; 4 maps and one figure in the text, 18 black and white plates in appendices 2 and 5; and 122 colour plates on unnumbered pages at the end of the volume; ISBN 978-90-04-16708-7.

For several years Tjalling Halbertsma worked as political advisor for the Mongolian prime-minister Nambar Enkhbayar. Trained as an anthropologist as well as a lawyer he became fascinated by the Christian (Nestorian) inheritance of Central Asia and the Far East and this book (originally a dissertation) is the result of this fascination. Earlier Halbertsma published in Dutch and for a wider public about Nestorianism in the Far East and about his travels in Mongolia. With a purely academic approach he published 'Some field notes and images of stone material from graves of the Church of the East in Inner Mongolia, China (with additional rubbings of seven stones from Wei Jian)' in *Monumenta Serica* 53 (2005), 113-244. The present work is so much a continuation of and a commentary on this lengthy article that it is regrettable that both publications did not appear in combination, or rather in one volume. *Monumenta Serica* is not a series readily available to many readers and is – just as the book under review – not exactly cheap to purchase so that the reader is now frequently left in the dark

with references to pictures or other documentation he cannot easily get to see.

In *Early Christian Remains of Inner Mongolia* the author concentrates on the area which during the rise of Mongol rule and the subsequent Yuan dynasty was inhabited by the Öngüt, a group (tribe, or clan) which was closely related and very loyal to Chinggis Khan and his ruling family. This is a relatively small area to the west of Beijing, north of the great bend of the Yellow River as well as (mainly) north of the Daqing mountains (as part of the Yinshan range). In fact, the Öngüt are the group associated in western sources with King George, the Nestorian ruler who was said to have been baptized into the Roman Catholic Church by John of Montecorvino and who is mentioned by Marco Polo.

On several occasions Halbertsma stresses that the Öngüt themselves were not Mongols, but a Turkic group instead. The reason for this, however, is not very clear. Other studies tend to keep the matter open and use terminology like Turco-Mongol, whereas at least the name of the group appears to be definitely Mongol and not Turkic. The fact that inscriptions of the Öngüt make use of the Uyghur script and language and contain Uyghur names and titles cannot be decisive in resolving this question as under the rule of Chinggis Khan both the Uyghur script and language came to be used as *lingua franca* and as the language of diplomacy in Central Asia and beyond (cf. Hans Jensen 1970, *Sign, Symbol and Script*, London, 414; and also Nicholas Poppe 1954, *Grammar of Written Mongolian*, Wiesbaden, 1). From this it is also clear that the total lack of 'inscriptions in the Mongol language' amongst the Öngüt Nestorian remains cannot be taken to illustrate 'the origins of the Öngüt as a Turkic rather than Mongol people' (pp. 309-310).

The content of the book is divided into four parts of which the third forms the core of the study. Parts one and two present introductory matter. Because this is done in a very clear and comprehensive way these chapters form an excellent introduction to (Nestorian) Christianity amongst de medieval Mongols in general. Part One consists of three chapters and starts with a brief but clear outline of the western and Chinese terminology for the 'Church in the East'. The conclusion is that none of the terms in present-day usage is really satisfactory, but that to avoid even further bewilderment it is best to stick to the term Nestorian, at least for the time being. Chapter 2 discusses the 'Medieval envoys connecting Europe and the Mongol empire'. It introduces the reader to Prester John, William of Rubruck, Rabban Sauma, Marco Polo and John of Montecorvino and gives a state-of-the art overview of the research concerning those envoys. That the medieval chronicler Otto von Freising is mentioned here as 'Otto of Friesing' is an odd mistake (perhaps due to the Frisian background betrayed by Halbertsma's own surname?). In Chapter 3 we are introduced to the 'Nestorian Christians in Central Asia and China' themselves. These 40 pages form a welcome addition to the growing literature about Nestorianism in the Far East in that they concentrate on the Mongol and, of course, the Öngüt realms rather than on China.

Part two treats the history of the 'discovery and documentation of Nestorian remains in Inner Mongolia' since the late

nineteenth century. This is done in two chapters (the chapters in the book are numbered consecutively) of which the first deals with the period before 1949 (the establishment of the People's Republic of China) while Chapter 5 discusses the research since 1949. The first discoverers were missionaries of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, more popularly known as 'Scheutists' or 'missionaries from Scheut' (Scheutveld in Belgium, where the congregation was based). In 1891 the first report about Christian tombstones in Inner Mongolia was published by Scheutists in a Belgian missionary bulletin. Of course these missionaries were interested in the possibility to relate their own work to possible remainders of earlier Christian presence in the area and it is fascinating to see how they on the one hand claimed find spots with Nestorian remains as theirs by right, whereas on the other hand they were reluctant to rebury human remains which were dug up in the process because 'probably being a Nestorian' and thus a heretic such a person could not be buried in a Catholic graveyard. Nonetheless the interest these missionaries took and the documentation they provided is still valuable for present and future research.

Other early discoverers were travellers of which some were trained as archaeologists and others came out of mere curiosity. Again, this does not make their travelogues, photographs, drawings and other documentation less valuable and Halbertsma makes clear that even in this field new discoveries are to be expected, or at least to be hoped for if all remaining material can be retrieved. Probably the most important researcher in this period was the Japanese archaeologist Egami Namio (1906-2002). After 1949 research was done most importantly by the Chinese archaeologist Gai Shanlin and, since the late 1990's by Halbertsma himself. In Appendix 2, Halbertsma reproduces some of the rubbings of (tomb)stones published by Gai. Of his own field work Halbertsma states the '[t]he first priority of the project was to record and document as much Nestorian material and their immediate context as possible before these were lost to grave looters, antique dealers or private collectors' (p. 125).

In Part three, the Chapters 6, 7 and 8 cover the Nestorian monuments themselves. In Chapter 6 the ruined city remains in the Öngüt area are dealt with, in Chapter 7 the burial sites and funerary material (Halbertsma insists on 'grave stones', 'grave sites' and 'grave material', and I noted 'grave hill' for burial mound on p. 289) and in Chapter 8 the material is discussed in more detail and placed in context. Five ruined cities are described in detail, followed by a paragraph about the problems of identifying these ruins with cities known from historical sources. Egami, who did considerable work in the ruins of Olon Sume, was convinced that he had found the capital of King George and could even identify the Roman Catholic church built there by Montecorvino. In this case Olon Sume would also have been the place from which Rabban Sauma set out for his voyage to the West. Unfortunately such identifications cannot be substantiated and must be considered speculative until further evidence comes to light.

The most tangible Nestorian material from the area (and from the whole of Mongolia, it seems) are tombstones, tomb figures (stone sculptures representing human beings and animals)

and stelae used as grave markers showing crosses and other Christian motives as well as (mainly short) inscriptions. Looting of the relevant archaeological sites has been endemic since the last century (and unfortunately still appears to be so) and despite the good work of Gai Shanlin and his colleagues of the State Archaeological Services the interest taken in this heritage seems to be low on the agenda. The remains and documentation of the archaeological work by Egami is dispersed and for a large part still only available in Japanese, the work by Gai is rather poorly published and available in Chinese only and all Halbertsma could do is travel around in the area and trace as much of the virtually completely dislocated material as possible. A sad result of this is that only the heavy stone objects, some decorated bricks and a glazed tile seem to remain, while as late as the 1920s travellers made mention of stone tombs, with desperately brief descriptions about decorations or the contents of such tombs. At present only looters and antique dealers seem to show an interest in such tombs and even though Halbertsma managed to interview some of the looters involved he appears to have had no access to the looting itself. If – for comparison – we look at the Liao tombs which have recently been excavated in Inner Mongolia, this may give an impression of the rich potential Inner Mongolia holds for archaeologists and of what may be lost because apparently the Christian sites do not get the attention they deserve. The Liao or Khitan dynasty ruled Northern China and Inner Mongolia since the end of the Tang dynasty in 709 until 1125 and it is known that under the Khitan there were Nestorians as well (an exhibition about the Liao tombs travelled the United States in 2000 and 2001; see Hsinyuan Tsao 2000, *Differences Preserved. Reconstructed tombs from the Liao and Song dynasties*, Portland, OR).

The result is that in Chapter 7 we get tantalizing descriptions of funerary material with frequent references to publications by Gai or Halbertsma (2005), both out of reach for most readers, and with hardly any archaeological background. For this latter problem Halbertsma is not to blame. It simply reflects the state in which the material is found and of the research done. On the other hand I would like to know more about objects like a gold cross which is mentioned only in passing and which seems to have disappeared into the antique market (or worse; p. 126 n. 96, p. 236 n. 69 and also p. 262). As with the tombstones themselves, every scrap of information is of value if we want to know more about the nature of Christianity amongst the Öngüt.

Another problem in this and the next chapter is the brevity with which the inscriptions are presented to the reader. Again, this is partly due to the simple fact that a corpus of edited and interpreted inscriptions is lacking, but even where he quotes translations, or refers to them, Halbertsma evidently is not at ease with the complexities of epigraphy and philology posed by this material. One wonders where the specialists are whom he could have asked for help. His sources now are a couple of articles published in the 1960s by Murayama Sichirō and recent work by Niu Ruji from the Research Centre for Minorities of Northwestern China, Xinjiang University (Urumqi). More detailed and useful is the formal description of the tombstones and their decoration.

Chapter 8 in many ways is the most interesting in the whole book. Here the material remains are confronted with historical sources like those written by medieval travellers who went from western Europe to the east or – in the case of Rabban Sauma and Mar Markos (the later Mar Yaballaha III) in the other direction. Here again the inscriptions on the tombstones are called in to help to clarify the intercultural relationships they illustrate by (for instance) the use of various dating systems. This integrated approach leads Halbertsma to see a historical development of Nestorianism amongst the Öngüt in which three phases can be distinguished, from an “uncompromised” religious identity and affiliation with the Church of the East through a phase of cultural adaptation in which elements of Christianity are integrated with ‘elements from other religious and cultural traditions’ in Inner Mongolia to a phase in which ‘the Nestorian Christians were thoroughly sinicised’ (p. 242). As Halbertsma already states himself, it may be questioned if the available material is not just too meagre to support such a detailed scenario, but as a working hypothesis it might be useful when more material is ever brought to light or when the known sources can be made operational in more detail. More doubtful, I think, is his statement that ‘[the Nestorian Christians in Inner Mongolia (...) did not maintain a standard church liturgy and iconography of the Church of the East and instead developed highly idiosyncratic grave-stones, decorations and inscriptions’ (p. 243). About Öngüt Nestorian liturgy we know absolutely nothing and of their iconography not much more but funerary material remains (and this mainly tombstones) and if Mar Rabban Sauma and Mar Markos indeed were Öngüt themselves they managed to fit in remarkably well with their fellow Christians in Baghdad and even in the Roman Catholic West.

The fourth and final part of the book deals with appropriation, a subject which is too easily forgotten by archaeologists and historians and with which the author betrays himself (in a very positive way) as an anthropologist. Chapter 9 deals with the ‘physical appropriation of Nestorian heritage’ by subsequently Buddhist settlers, Han Chinese settlers, looters and treasure hunters and tourism developers. In many ways this is a sad story of neglect and destruction. With growing vigour the ruined cities of Inner Mongolia have been seen as places which can be mined for building material like bricks and stone (often tombstones) and more recent also as treasure troves for farmers to make some extra money to get them through the at times extremely harsh winters. It is the antiques market which profits most from this struggle for life which brings the looters themselves relatively small money and leaves them with a land robbed of its history. Tourism poses a new threat as objects are sometimes moved back from museum (depots) into the field – and at times get damaged or destroyed in the process – to be used as props in and around resorts. In this way the objects are used merely to enhance a newly created *couleur locale* and devoid of their original meaning or value. Of course this process is not new, nor specific for Inner Mongolia or China, or even for developing countries in general. For those interested in how e.g. the United States of America lost – or rather destroyed – their ancient history within less than a century, Roger G. Kennedy 1994, *Hidden Cities. The discovery and loss*

of ancient North American civilization, New York makes a good read. Here too neglect and destruction wiped out most of the physical memory of a continent.

Chapter 10 describes how the Mongols themselves appropriated the ruins and other physical remains of earlier times they encountered in their own country. For centuries they regarded these ruined cities and burial sites with respect – and often a slight fear – and gave meaning to them in legends and anecdotes in which remainders of historical lore survived until fairly recently. Finally, in Chapter 11 the appropriation by missionaries (the Scheutists mentioned above) and by modern research is briefly discussed. These chapters are important because they make us aware that every historian, ethno-historian, anthropologist or – for that matter – sociologist has a role in his or her own research, just like any other individual handling the object of study. By piecing together this long lost history it also becomes our history, however hard we try to be objective and neutral. For this very reason it is important that the results of a study like this should also be made available to the people in the field, the Mongol herders, Han Chinese farmers and Chinese tourism developers as much as to Chinese and Mongolian archaeologists in the field.

So, in many ways this book offers an important addition both to the history of the Mongols and to the history of the Nestorian Church in the Far East. Halbertsma offers a good introduction to the subject and brings together and discusses an important body of material. As stated, the whole would be stronger if presented together with the documentation published earlier in *Monumenta Serica*. And as the chapters about appropriation make clear a more easily accessible publication of the whole – if possible in Chinese as well – would be welcome, not only for those interested in the Western World, but also for those living amongst the very remains of Nestorian Christianity in Inner Mongolia themselves. New and hopefully less destructive ways of appropriation might be opened by it.

One of the fascinating, but also bewildering aspects of the cultural history of Central and East Asia lies in the multitude of languages (and writing systems) one encounters. It is here that this study is weakest and in this respect it might have been well if Halbertsma would have made explicit which languages he is able to read (or at least decipher) and which not. It is apparent from this book that he does not know Syriac, Old Turkic nor, most probably, Chinese and Japanese. However excusable this is for an anthropologist and a lawyer, his struggle with linguistic problems – sometimes as elementary as various transcriptions of names – at times seem to keep him from being more clear at points where this might easily be possible. It is also strange to see that in a volume published in a Sinological series based at a renowned Sinological institute oddities like ‘Tabuhe river’ (‘Tabu river river’), a Chinese designation for the Shara Muren (p. 147), or the transcription of numerals as e.g. ‘Plate I.V.VII’ for ‘Plate 157’ (p. 320) have not been corrected by the general editor. The doubt expressed in a phrase like ‘... the important historic site of ‘Ching-Chou’ listed in the *Jinshi* (presumably Jingzhou)’ (p. 148) is completely out of place as Jingzhou is simply the (modern) pinyin transcription of the Chinese name which in the now outdated Wade-Giles transcription appeared as Ching-Chou. (*Jinshi* – here again in pinyin transcription – or ‘Book of Jin’ is the official Chinese

history of the Jin (Chin) or Jurchen dynasty, 1115-1234). Again, the idea that the Chinese Biqigetuhalai ‘seems’ a transcription of Mongolian Bicigtü-Qoghulai (p. 166) is misled. The one simply *is* a transcription of the other and both refer to the same place name. On the same page (166) fragments of an inscription are said to be ‘in, presumably, the Syriac script’, raising the question whether Halbertsma is not equipped to identify the script (and had no access to a specialist who can) or that his source (Gai Shanlin) leaves him in doubt because of the poor quality of the published material. Later, on p. 175, he actually states that an ‘image published by Gai is simply too small too (*sic*) work from’ and his own reproductions from Gai confirm this problem, but in this not unimportant matter his phrasing is not always clear. Another wish I would like to express is for a more detailed map of the area under study. At first I guessed that perhaps the vagueness about locations was on purpose to keep looters away, but this idea proved wrong when I noted Appendix One, offering detailed ‘Coordinates of Nestorian Sites in Inner Mongolia and Fangshan’.

Despite these critical remarks it must be stressed that this is an important study precisely because of its focus on the historical Öngüt and their Nestorian ‘connection’. The author not only offers a clear context for Öngüt Christianity, but also for the study of this fascinating phenomenon. Halbertsma states that ‘the destruction of so many sites makes the virtual preservation of the material in textual and visual form the more important’ (p. 199) and he pleads for the ‘publication of source material and further study of the inscriptions’ (p. 245). Perhaps the World Wide Web offers possibilities in this respect, which more than expensive and hard to find publications on paper (however necessary these undoubtedly are) makes the material available to all concerned and interested, not in the least those living at present in the area where the material is at home.

Lauran Toorians

Nada HÉLOU, *La fresque (I) dans les anciennes églises du Liban. Régions de Jbeil et Batroun*, Mansourié, Editions Aleph: 2007; 64 pp.; 22.8 × 11.7 cm, 58 illustrations en couleur; ISBN 978-9953-0-0931-5; US\$ 7.

Nada HÉLOU, *L'icône dans le patriarcat d'Antioche (VI^e – XIX^e siècles)*, Mansourié, Editions Aleph: 2007; 64 pp.; 22.8 × 11.7 cm, 68 illustrations en couleur, 1 dessin noir et blanc; ISBN 978-9953-0-0932-2; US\$ 7.

Nada HÉLOU, *La fresque (II) dans les anciennes églises du Liban. Églises du Nord*, Mansourié, Editions Aleph: 2008; 77 pp.; 22.8 × 11.7 cm, 59 illustrations en couleur; ISBN 978-9953-0-1224-7; US\$ 7.

Depuis les dernières années le Liban fait l'objet d'un intérêt croissant parmi les historiens d'art spécialisés dans l'art chrétien du Moyen-Orient. Notamment après la fin de la guerre

civile en 1990 la recherche a connu un grand essor. Elle se concentre en premier lieu sur les quelques dizaines d'églises paroissiales et monastiques dans lesquelles des peintures murales médiévales – ou trop souvent hélas des rares fragments qui en restent – ont subsisté à l'injure du temps. Presque toutes les peintures sont issues du XII^e ou XIII^e siècle, lorsque le Liban actuel faisait partie de deux états croisés: le Comté de Tripoli et le Royaume de Jérusalem. Les églises concernées étaient fréquentées tant par les chrétiens byzantins-orthodoxes du pays (melchites), que par les maronites et probablement aussi les syriens orthodoxes. Bien que la plupart des peintres soit d'origine locale, on a aussi découvert des travaux d'artistes travaillant dans la tradition byzantine. La peinture murale libanaise joue donc un rôle modèle important dans la renaissance vécue par la chrétienté orientale à partir du XI^e siècle, laquelle s'acheva lors de la chute des états croisés vers la fin du XIII^e siècle. Une seconde renaissance vit le jour beaucoup plus tard, pendant la période ottomane, privilégiant alors la production des icônes; de nombreux exemplaires des XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles témoignent de cette période d'épanouissement artistique à laquelle les chrétiens libanais participèrent pleinement.

La plus grande spécialiste libanaise en art chrétien est Nada Hérou, professeur rattaché à l'Université libanaise ainsi que diverses autres universités nationales. Elle a fait ses preuves par diverses publications, et elle est donc sans aucun doute la personne désignée pour introduire le sujet à un plus large public. Les trois publications sous discussion s'adressent à des lecteurs non formés universitairement, plus particulièrement aux Libanais maîtrisant la langue française, mais aussi aux visiteurs de ce pays s'intéressant à l'histoire de son héritage matériel chrétien.

La partie traitant des peintures murales des régions de Jbeil et Batroun s'ouvre sur une définition du terme fresque. L'auteur constate à juste titre que 'le terme fresque est souvent utilisé improprement dans le langage courant pour désigner la peinture murale en général et plus rarement la technique'. Néanmoins elle préfère conserver cette expression maintenant entrée dans les mœurs.

Après une courte vue d'ensemble sur les développements historiques au Liban pendant l'époque croisée, elle poursuit en exposant la différence entre les traditions byzantines et orientales, deux courants que l'on rencontre au Liban. Le livre est toutefois consacré en majeure partie à l'introduction des peintures murales dans une région essentiellement peuplée de maronites. En ce qui concerne les environs de Jbeil, l'auteur développe spécialement les programmes décoratifs assez bien préservés de l'église de Saint Théodore à Behdidat et de l'église de Saint Charbel à Maad, ainsi que quelques monuments dont les fragments sont moins bien conservés. Le programme de décoration le plus important près de Batroun est celui de l'église de Saint Saba à Eddé al-Batroun. L'auteur aborde également les peintures dans l'église de Saint Georges à Rashkida, la petite chapelle rupestre de Saydet Naya près de Kfar Shleiman et l'église de Saydet el-Kharayeb à Kfar Hilda. Il faut dire à son honneur qu'elle nomme aussi des églises médiévales sans traces visibles de peintures. Après tout ces édifices sont eux aussi des témoins précieux de la vie chrétienne si florissante alors, et il ne fait aucun doute que beaucoup d'entre eux ont été décorés jadis.

Après le commentaire sur les monuments décorés suit une courte parenthèse intitulée 'un patrimoine culturel menacé de disparition'. D'un point de vue didactique il s'agit là probablement de la partie principale. L'auteur remarque combien la fréquentation continue d'édifices religieux peut être désastreuse. Les églises ne sont pas des musées et nécessitent un entretien permanent; les croyants brûlent des cierges devant des représentations de saints qui, en conséquence, sont endommagés par des dépôts de suie. D'autre part des rénovations représentent souvent une menace pour les traces de peintures estimées non-reconnaissables; la préférence répandue au Liban en faveur d'intérieurs parfaitement lisses et visuellement attrayants en est ici la cause. Pour renverser la situation l'Association pour l'Etude et la Restauration des Fresques dans les Eglises Médiévales du Liban vient d'être créée, une organisation dont font partie des scientifiques libanais comme N. Hérou. L'association a déjà achevé son premier projet, à savoir la restauration de la chapelle rupestre de Kfar Shleiman. Bien sûr il ne peut pas être mentionné que pendant l'été 2008 la restauration de l'église à Maad a été entreprise. La réalisation de ces travaux repose entre les mains d'une équipe polonaise de restaurateurs et d'archéologues, également responsables de la mise à jour et de la conservation des peintures du monastère de Kaftoun situé au sud d'Amioun (voir plus loin). Après des années dans un état d'abandon des initiatives couronnées de succès ont été prises afin de préserver cet art ecclésiastique unique au Liban pour les générations futures. N'oublions cependant pas que la responsabilité du patrimoine culturel libanais repose sur les Libanais eux-mêmes. Partant de ce point de vue la présente publication apporte une contribution modeste mais primordiale à la prise de conscience du public libanais.

La partie la plus récente de cette série traite des églises décorées du secteur de Koura, qui a toujours été peuplé essentiellement de Melchites, ainsi que de quelques autres monuments dans la vallée de Qadisha au Mont Liban, une région maronite. Que justement dans le Koura on découvre de fortes influences byzantines ne soulèvera aucun étonnement, même si, ici aussi, ce sont surtout les artistes du pays qui ont été actifs. Le programme pictural dans l'église de Saint Phocas à Amioun, hélas sévèrement endommagé, en est un exemple frappant. Bien que d'autres chercheurs aient tendance à attribuer ces peintures à des peintres de Chypre, l'auteur souligne certaines caractéristiques menant vers un artiste régional qui travaillait dans la tradition comnène tardive de 1200 environ. Elle fait aussi la critique de la remarquable église romane de Saint Georges dans cette ville, bien qu'à l'état actuel, aucune trace de fresque ne soit visible. Il est probable qu'il s'agisse là d'un bâtiment utilisé à cette époque par des Latins; ceux-ci étaient rattachés d'une façon ou d'une autre à la seigneurie de Besmedin, dont le quartier général était situé près d'Amioun. Plus à l'Est se trouve Kousba, où, dans le monastère de Saint Dimitri (Mar Mitri) on peut observer un des rares exemples de peintures murales du XII^e siècle. Au-delà dans le livre les fragments d'une seconde église de cette petite ville, ainsi que ceux dans le monastère de Hamatura sont développés plus en détails.

Après l'analyse des maigres fresques du monastère de Saint Élie à Kfar Kahel l'auteur s'arrête sur une découverte récente,

à savoir les peintures dans l'église des Saints Serge et Bacchus, située près du monastère de Notre Dame de Kaftoun au sud-est de Tripoli. La restauration de ces travaux par une équipe polonaise touche à sa fin. En ce qui concerne le style et l'iconographie, les admirables fresques de Kaftoun sont probablement les plus byzantines dans la région, mais les inscriptions jointes sont rédigées en grec et en syriaque. Il est remarquable que les sources médiévales qui fassent mention de ce monastère soient aussi bien melchites que maronites.

Après la critique de quelques églises aux représentations très fragmentaires, l'auteur dirige son attention vers la vallée de Qadisha, une région montagneuse qui a toujours énormément attiré les ermites. La quantité de monuments ornés de peintures est cependant décevante, certainement si l'on considère la grande concentration d'églises décorées entre Jbeil et Tripoli. Dans le monastère de Qannoubin, autrefois la résidence des patriarches maronites, on aperçoit encore la tête d'un ange. Les peintures du XVII^e siècle dans l'église sont en bon état, mais l'auteur ne s'y attarde pas. Il existe encore deux églises avec des fresques près de Hadchit, à savoir la chapelle rupestre de Saydet ad-Dur et celle de Deir Salib, bâtie dans une grotte sous le village. Le triste sort des fresques dans la chapelle de Mart Shmuni (Sainte Salomone) rappelle que les Libanais se comportent parfois légèrement envers les vestiges de représentations antiques. Peu après leur documentation par la spécialiste canadienne Erica Cruikshank Dodd, ils ont été victimes d'un besoin de renouvellement. En se reportant aux photos publiées, au moins une partie du programme a été réalisée par le peintre ayant travaillé à Behdidat et Maad aux environs de la moitié du XIII^e siècle.

Dans la vallée de Qadisha on a aussi découvert quelques petites églises avec des représentations primitives. On les attribue à des moines éthiopiens, dont on sait qu'ils séjournaient dans cette région dans la seconde moitié du quinzième siècle.

Le livre sur les icônes suit en partie le même schéma que ceux sur les peintures murales. On y explique comment les icônes sont peintes, on parle de l'histoire la plus reculée de l'icône, de l'iconoclasme, de la conception de l'icône byzantine et de l'iconostase. Il s'agit là de sujets d'ordre général dans lesquels le Liban ne semble pas jouer un rôle important, cependant le texte des pages 25 à 29 nous donne un tout autre aperçu. Le monastère grec-orthodoxe de Notre Dame de Kaftoun possède un exemplaire peint des deux côtés que l'on peut dater du XIII^e siècle en se basant sur le style et l'iconographie. Bien que ce soit la seule icône médiévale connue au Liban actuellement, des similitudes stylistiques frappantes avec d'autres icônes dans le monastère de Sainte Catherine dans le Sinaï ainsi que diverses peintures murales au Liban et en Syrie, notamment ceux dans l'église des Saints Serge et Bacchus à côté du monastère, montrent que ces exemplaires aussi ont été réalisés par des peintres des environs de Tripoli.

La plupart des icônes que l'on voit dans les églises grecques-orthodoxes et grecques-catholiques, datent du XVII^e jusqu'au XIX^e siècle, période pendant laquelle les communautés chrétiennes vivaient une nouvelle renaissance. Aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles c'est surtout l'école d'Alep qui sert de référence. La production se caractérise par de fortes influences crétoises,

mais elle est ouverte à des éléments empruntés à l'art occidental. De 1809 à 1821 Michel Polychronis le Crétois a travaillé dans cette région; sa tradition devait être poursuivie par des artistes du pays. En 1860 des conflits antichrétiens ont eu lieu tant au Liban qu'en Syrie, événements dramatiques qui causèrent la perte de beaucoup d'églises et d'objets d'art. La reconstruction a cependant été amorcée rapidement, et la réalisation des nombreuses et indispensables icônes fut confiée cette fois à des artistes originaires de Jérusalem pour la plupart.

Les trois publications se terminent par un lexique et une bibliographie modeste. Toutes les photos sont en couleur, certes, mais l'impression en est médiocre et la reliure est, elle aussi, de qualité inférieure. Autre inconvénient: si – particulièrement – les brochures sur les peintures murales se prêtent parfaitement à servir de guide touristique, aucune description d'itinéraire n'y est incluse. Malgré l'inclusion d'une carte topographique mentionnant les lieux discutés toute personne ne connaissant pas bien la route ne pourra pas visiter les églises sans faire appel à un guide routier. Dans l'attente d'un volume sur les vestiges d'églises et les sols en mosaïque de la haute époque byzantine, on peut conclure que les trois publications donnent une vue d'ensemble compacte sur l'art chrétien libanais.

Mat Immerzeel, Université de Leiden

Alfredo TRADIGO, *Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church*, Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications, 2006; 384 pp.; 19.7 × 13.3 cm; 400 colour illustrations; ISBN 0-89236-845-4; £ 14.99.

In the past years, countless books have been published to cater for the steadily growing host of icon devotees. What these publications often have in common is a quasi-academic, uncritical admiration for this particular kind of religious art, a self-evident emphasis on iconographic topics, and the fact that they are addressed to a broad public. Alfredo Tradigo's richly illustrated booklet is one of the most recent shoots of this tree. In line with the tradition of such publications, its contents are confined to the subjects the audience is acquainted with. This becomes clear already in the introduction (pp. 6-7), which describes the icon as '(...) the simplest, most immediate form of religious self-awareness that the Byzantine and Slavic peoples possess', and limits the distribution areas of the art of icon painting to the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai, Mount Athos, Constantinople, Crete, the Balkans, the Russian schools and 'the earliest communities in the Egyptian Desert near Thebes'. The loyal readers of *Eastern Christian Art* will immediately understand that the Middle East will come off badly in this publication; we will come back to this matter later on.

The well organized arrangement of the subjects discussed starts with the iconostasis, the Royal Doors, the Feast Cycle, and calendar, processional, domestic, and theological icons, and continues with scenes derived from the Old Testament, the Gospels and Church feasts. Next follow icons of the Virgin,

Christ, apostles and martyrs, fathers of the Eastern Church, monastic saints of the East, and finally Russian saints. The author treats each topic concisely, adding relevant Bible and liturgical texts, titles, sources and distinctive iconographic features. Basic information about the represented icons is summarized in captions, and some more detailed information is added to the photographs.

That the author limits himself to providing well known information is apparent from, for example, the discussion of the scene of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Paradise (p. 64). He enters into detail on the tradition of representing Abraham holding the souls of the righteous in his lap, but the reader is kept guessing about the presence of the two other patriarchs. Apparently the author is not acquainted with the recent enlightening studies on this motif and its Middle Eastern origin by Erica Cruikshank Dodd and Gertrud van Loon¹. This simultaneously lays bare the geographic limitations that the author has imposed on himself, and *de facto* also on the reader. The majority of the icons discussed belong to the Russian tradition, with the addition of sporadic instances from, amongst others, the Monastery of St Catherine, Greece, Cyprus and Georgia. As far as Egypt is concerned, only a few well-known early specimens are dealt with: the icon of St Menas and Christ in the Louvre (p. 285), and that of Bishop Apa Abraham in the Museum of Byzantine Art in Berlin (p. 300). By contrast, the rich Coptic tradition of the Middle Ages and Ottoman period remains entirely out of sight, as do Ethiopian icons. This also counts for the many icons found in Lebanon and Syria; only three pieces from the Greek Orthodox Monastery of Our Lady of Balamand (Lebanon) are included (pp. 325, 377, 390). Since much has been published about the art of icon painting in the Middle East in the past years², it can be

concluded that the author has missed the opportunity to broaden his view and that of his readers. Had he added this new dimension to his study, he would have filled a gap characteristic of the average icon book. Despite this shortcoming, this handy publication, with many excellent illustrations and clear explanations, may be a valuable acquisition for the library of the true icon-lover.

Mat Immerzeel, Leiden University

¹ E. Cruikshank Dodd, 'The Three Patriarchs of Mar Musa al-Habashi: Syrian Painting and its Relationship with the West', *Al-Masāq* 12 (2000), 99-139; G.J.M. van Loon, 'Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Paradise in Coptic Wall Painting', *Visual Resources* 19,1 (2003), 67-79.

² For Egypt, see P. van Moorsel, M. Immerzeel, L. Langen, *Catalogue Général du Musée Copte. The Icons*, Cairo 1994; and Z. Skalova, G. Gabra, *Icons of the Nile Valley*, Cairo 2003 (reprint 2006). For Lebanon and Syria, see V. Candea (ed.), *Icones Melkites*, Beirut 1969; *idem, Icônes Grecques, Melkites, Russes, Collection Abou Adal*, Genève 1993; M. Zibawi, *The Icon: Its Meaning and History*, Milan 1993; *Catalogue Icônes du Liban. Catalogue de l'exposition de la Mairie du V^e arrondissement et du Centre Culturel du Panthéon avec la parrainage du Ministère de la Culture (16 septembre-20 octobre 1996)*, Paris 1996; M. Immerzeel, *Syrische iconen/Syrian Icons*, Gent 1997; *Catalogue Icônes de Saint-Georges, exposition organisée par le Musée Nicolas Sursock du 27 septembre au 29 octobre 2000*, Beyrouth 2000; *Catalogue Icônes arabes; art chrétien du Levant, Institut du monde arabe, 6 mai au 17 août 2003*, Paris 2003.